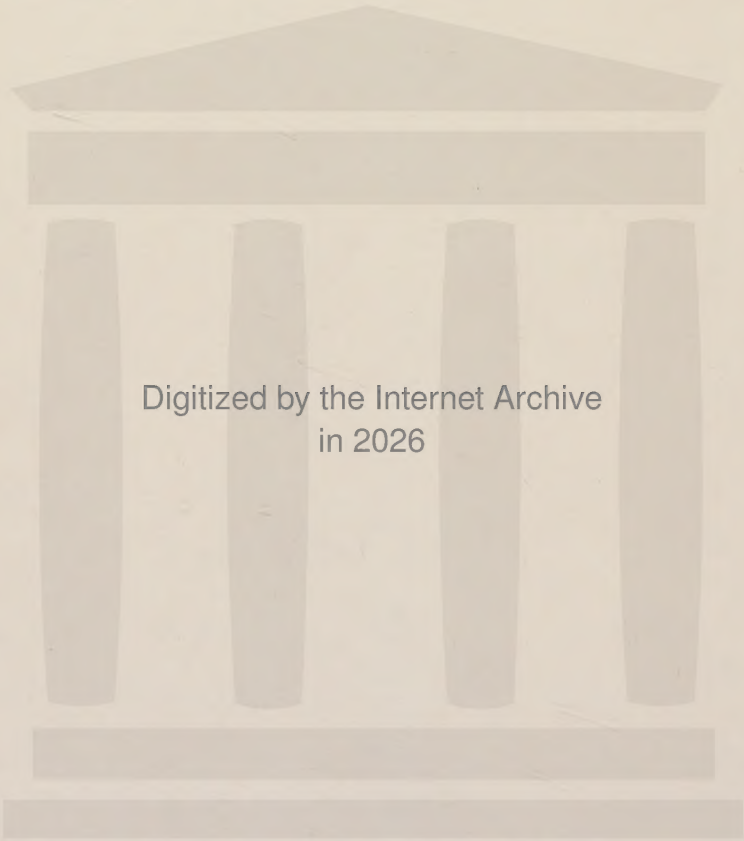
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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GERMANIC STUDIES

THEODOR FONTANE AS A CRITIC OF THE DRAMA

THEODOR FONTANE
AS A CRITIC OF THE DRAMA

BY
BERTHA E. TREBEIN, PH.D.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER

Approved for publication, on behalf of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures of Columbia University.

CALVIN THOMAS

NEW YORK, June, 1915

PREFACE

THE following study of Theodor Fontane's criticism of the drama is the outgrowth of interest in that author's English period awakened by a suggestion of Professor Camillo von Klenze of Brown University. It is a pleasure to me to acknowledge here my indebtedness to Professor von Klenze for thus introducing me indirectly to a phase of Fontane's activity, less widely known than some others, that shows the "consistent realist," the "path-finder," as the late Richard M. Meyer terms him,[1] in process of growth.

The privileges of examining unpublished material and of using the excerpts from it which appear below I owe primarily to Mr. Friedrich Fontane of Berlin-Grunewald, but my thanks are due also in this connection to Dr. Paul Schlenther of Friedenau.

I wish to express my appreciation further to my colleague, Professor Mary E. Markley, for reading my manuscript and for helpful suggestions concerning it; to Professor F. W. Heuser of Columbia University and to Dr. Dorothy Brewster of the Extension Department for careful assistance in proofreading; to the librarians of Cornell, Harvard, Yale, and Columbia Universities and of the Royal Library in Berlin, to the Secretary of the *Deutsches Haus*, Columbia University, to Dr. W. Paszkowski, Mrs. Paul Fesca and Miss Rose Paucksch of Berlin, and to my colleague, Professor Lucile Alexander, for other courtesies that furthered my work. I do not forget my indebtedness to the late Dr. Rudolf Tombo, Jr.

My deepest obligation is, however, to Professor Calvin Thomas and Professor Wm. Addison Hervey, of Columbia University. To them I am indebted for the inspiration that comes from unfailing scholarly guidance, for generous and kindly interest, and for prompt and valuable advice throughout the various stages of my work.

AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE,
October, 1915.

[1] Richard M. Meyer, Die deutsche Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, (3. umgearbeitete Aufl., Berlin, 1906), 549.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

References to "Gesammelte Werke von Theodor Fontane" are as follows:

"Werke"	W
Series of "Werke" . . .	1 or 2
Volume in Series . . .	Roman numeral
Page (not introductory) .	Arabic "
Page (introductory) . .	Roman "

Unpublished letters . . .	L
Diary	D
Vossische Zeitung	V. Z.
Beilage	B
"Die Londoner Theater" .	L. T. (used in Chap. III).

INTRODUCTION

Any study of Theodor Fontane's development as critic must at this time be based necessarily upon more or less incomplete data. His notebooks are a sealed volume, likewise a number of articles, not included in the published "Nachlass" ("Gesammelte Werke von Theodor Fontane," 2 Serie, IX, Berlin, 1908), which were incomplete or which Fontane had for some other reason withheld from print. The letters to acquaintances and friends that have been given to the public appear with the introductory statement that this material — as far as collected — would fill many volumes besides,[1] and although the editors aimed to choose for publication whatever afforded valuable new glimpses into the life, work, and varied interests of Fontane, it may be inferred with comparative certainty from the spontaneous bits of individualistic criticism in the letters selected that the unpublished correspondence has more to yield in this line.

It is not safe to infer that the dramatic criticism is more complete at present than other lines of the critical work. Certainly no last word can yet be spoken. The inventory of posthumous material contains, in addition to stating the possibility of an extant translation of "Hamlet," an item referring to criticisms of Ibsen, Kielland, Zola, and another concerning personal accounts of miscellaneous reading (the latter supplemented, however, by the comment that much of this material has appeared in print). The records of the Berlin literary club, "Der Tunnel über der Spree," which in 1914 were in the initial stages of preparation for publication by Dr. Fritz Behrend under the auspices of the Royal Library in Berlin, will no doubt reveal something of value in regard

[1] W, 2, X, XI; cf. X, Vorwort, I.

to the earlier years. Fontane was a member of this club 1844–1865; he held the office of substitute secretary from July to October, 1846, from April, 1850, to February, 1852, and was regular recording secretary from September, 1852, to May, 1854.[1] The only information that I received from Dr. Behrend concerning Fontane's records was that they were regarded by some of the Tunnel members as rather too strongly colored with personal conviction, from which one may infer that they might be of interest in their bearing upon the early period of his development as a critic.

Yet a number of considerations seem to justify at this time a study of Fontane's criticism of the drama. That part of the theater criticism published in book form, "Kritische Causerien über Theater" and "Die Londoner Theater" ("Gesammelte Werke," 2. Serie, VIII, Berlin, 1904), gives only a relative idea of the extent of his contributions in this line. Dr. Schlenther, the editor of the "Causerien," states that his collection contains only about one-third of the whole number of reports on the theater. He expresses the conviction that the reports had been undervalued by the public at large, partly because readers of the criticisms as they appeared piecemeal in the daily press lost the element which rendered each report but a fraction of a harmonious whole full of insight into life and art. He makes no attempt, however, to trace a connection between these so-called "Chats" and the earlier essay on the London stage, or to treat the development of Fontane's artistic convictions in the "Chats" themselves and thus define "das geistige Band" of which he speaks as the unifying factor.[2] His desire was that the writer's work should speak for itself in the main. Therefore, although this collection shows much of Fontane's ingenious method, its incompleteness and the arrangement of the reports chronologically with reference to authors make it, in spite of its very suggestive

[1] The records of the Tunnel were not accessible to me; the above data are from a brief printed report found in the Royal Library, Berlin, catalog No. Aa 2148, (1914) "Zur Geschichte des literarischen Sonntag-Vereins, 'Tunnel über der Spree' in Berlin, 1827–1877"; cf. p. 24.

[2] W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, V.

introductory appreciation, primarily a reflector of Fontane's cleverness and versatility.

The title, "Critical Chats," is in spite of appropriateness somewhat misleading as to the value of the content of these reports. Fontane was, indeed, so brilliant and unusual a *causeur* both in actual intercourse and in his books that this phase of his work has with justice been the occasion of much comment. All his readers find in it a quality of style, rare at best, especially rare in German literature. Those who did not know him personally prize it as an avenue of approach to closer contact with a gifted and lovable personality. To those who came into immediate relationship with him, his frank but courteous good-fellowship, his true humanity — based on insight and free from sentimentality — his inexhaustible store of anecdote, his humor, his esprit made his whole work seem at best but a partial expression of the man. The desire of those who write about him to keep his individuality fresh and vital is unquestionable evidence of what personal contact with him must have meant. The spice of personality is perhaps nowhere more prominent in his work than in his critical reports. He himself laid stress upon this element in criticism,[1] but to consider this the dominant factor in its value is to underestimate its deeper worth.

Fontane called himself on one occasion at least a *causeur*[2] and regarded this faculty with some satisfaction as a part of his heritage from French ancestry. He added, however, on this occasion — he was speaking here of the conversational style in his narratives — that he was above all an artist and realized as an artist that brilliant conversation is not everywhere in place. The same relativity of stylistic values is found in his criticism. The style and method are secondary in that they are determined by the character of the play in hand. The chatty style frequently gives way, accordingly, to a tone of deep seriousness. Yet the brilliance of the *causeur* seems to have thrown into lingering shadow the often

[1] The discussion in Chapter II shows the importance which Fontane attached to this element in criticism.

[2] W, 2, VII (Berlin, 1904), 22.

less obtrusive worth of the critic's point of view. Fontane has an established reputation as ballad-writer, as "Wanderer," as historian, as narrator, as letter-writer. His criticism has been overlooked except as it has been revealed in something of its unity in the "Causerien."[1] Some wit of Fontane's own day interpreted his signature "Th. F." as an abbreviation for "*Theater Fremdling.*" Whether the term really established itself in his lifetime or not, such he has to some extent remained.

The present study rests upon the conviction that the content of Fontane's criticism is worthy of more detailed consideration than it has received. It has been my purpose first to inquire into his attitude toward the drama and toward criticism in general; then, following as far as possible the chronological development of his convictions on esthetic

[1] Fontane's poems (including ballads) reached the 15th edition (Cotta) 1910, and selected ballads were brought out separately (Cotta) 1907. Volume 1 ("Grafschaft Ruppin") of "Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg" had its 13th edition (Cotta) 1909; vol. 2 ("Oderland"), 10th ed. (Cotta) 1907; vol. 3 ("Havelland"), 12th ed. (Cotta) 1910; vol. 4 ("Spreeland"), 10th ed. (Cotta) 1910. "Kriegsgefangen," brought out as a volume of the collected works (Fontane, Berlin) in 1906 after 5 previous editions up to 1900, has had its 18th–20th thousand, and a French translation, "Souvenirs d'un prisonnier de guerre allemand en 1871," was brought out in Paris, 1892. Of the narratives, "Irrungen, Wirrungen" had its 7th ed. 1901 (coll. works, Berlin); "Effi Briest," its 26th ed. (coll. works) 1909, and a French translation appeared (Fontane, Berlin) 1902; "Der Stechlin" had its 3d ed. 1899, the year after its appearance, its 19th ed. (coll. works) 1909; various other volumes have had various editions: "Unwiederbringlich" and "Grete Minde" passed the 6th ed. (Cotta) in 1904 and 1908 respectively and were brought out among the coll. works in 1912 and 1911; "Unwiederbringlich" appeared in Danish translation ("Grevinde Volk"), 1894. The family letters ("Briefe," 1. Sammlung, Berlin, 1905) had their 6th complete ed. (Fontane, Berlin), 1911, the 1st vol. reaching the 11th ed.; the letters to friends ("Briefe," 2. Sammlung), the 1st–4th ed. (Fontane, Berlin), 1910. The "Causerien" passed through 3 editions in 1904, the year of their appearance, and were brought out among the coll. works in 1908; they did not contribute to the growing fame of the author during his lifetime but came as a reminder to a more limited public than that to which the narratives, poems, and books of reminiscence appealed, of an activity relinquished officially years before.

questions concerning dramatic art, to work out a conception of the system according to which he pronounced the judgment of approval or disapproval; to give, finally, in merely suggestive lines a comparative evaluation of his work as critic. The study makes no claim to include close investigation of the justice of the criticism of individual actors in their various roles; it deals with histrionic art only in its bearings upon dramaturgic principles. Since the performances at the Royal Theater, upon which Fontane's regular press reports are based, were in German — exception being made only for visiting actors and actresses of renown from foreign countries — titles of plays are as a rule given in German in his criticisms. Although the essay on the London theaters is on Shakspere as seen in England, he used the titles in his own tongue, since he wrote for a public that knew Shakspere in German translation. His reports on the French players were, on the other hand, on plays given in French by a visiting troop in Berlin; these titles he gave, naturally, in French. For the sake of added uniformity I have given in English the titles of all except German and French plays.

Many excerpts from Fontane's criticism have been necessary in order to show chronological development or the invariableness of Fontane's norms, as the case might be, yet the treatment of individual points is, of necessity, in nearly every case suggestive rather than complete. The illustrations referring to the *Vossische Zeitung* (1870–1889) as a source have not been published elsewhere before; occasionally the excerpt from this paper overlaps that portion of the same report published in the "Causerien" and such cases have been noted. It has been my privilege to read copies of the general diary (as yet unpublished) and of the family letters not included in the volumes given to the public, and a few miscellaneous unpublished criticisms in the original; also to use for comparison with my citations copied from the *Vossische Zeitung* the collection made by Fontane of his own reports and reviews and those of contemporaries in which he was particularly interested. The diary record is incomplete, made

apparently often from memory for periods of from one week to a month or more. The unpublished family letters, as would be inferred from the introduction to the published volumes,[1] furnish on the whole additional evidence rather than new evidence. There are, however, occasional bits of value bearing in some way upon the criticism of the drama. Some statements concerning conditions, too, supplement those found in the published letters and thus contribute, in the absence of a biography, to a more complete knowledge of the periods of Fontane's life devoted in part to criticism. The excerpts[2] from the diary and the unpublished letters used in the following chapters have been compared with the original manuscript under the direction of Mr. Friedrich Fontane, son of Theodor Fontane, have been approved by him and by Dr. Paul Schlenther, both members of the *Theodor Fontane Nachlass-Kommission*, and are published with their permission.

Except for some changes in type the excerpts follow accurately the sources from which they are taken; i.e. the *Vossische Zeitung*, the corrected copies of the manuscript letters and of the diary, the published letters as found in "Gesammelte Werke," respectively. Roman type is used throughout this study, and simple italics are used to express both simple italics and spaced type in corresponding lines in the sources. Inconsistencies or peculiarities in spelling have been retained; *e.g.* Aelteste (*V. Z.* Jan. 3, 1878, B2; cf. below, p. 73), ächte (*ibid.*), Aechtheit (*V. Z.* Nov. 19, 1875, B1; cf. below, p. 86) but Äusserlichkeit (W, 2, VIII, 563; cf. below, p. 89); Herman Grimm W, 2, XI, 388; cf. below, p. 38) but Hermann (report on "Die Hermannsschlacht," *V. Z.* Jan. 21, 1875, B2); Fores (*V. Z.* Nov. 18, 1875, B3; cf. below, p. 84) but Forres ("Jenseit des Tweed," Berlin, 1860, Chap. XVIII, 235 ff.); Maasse (*V. Z.* Mar. 8, 1882, B1).

The following sketch of Fontane is added here to provide, in points of formative influence and fact, sufficient general back-

[1] W, 2, VI, Vorwort, VII.

[2] Omissions of unimportant or irrelevant phrases are indicated in all excerpts used by a series of dots.

ground to facilitate a clear understanding of the part that dramatic criticism played in his interests. A detailed outline of his work, as far as it can be determined from the accessible sources, is given in the Appendix.

Henri Théodore Fontane — commonly known as Theodor Fontane — was the eldest of five children of Louis Henri Fontane, an apothecary, and Emilie Fontane, born Labry, daughter of a silk-merchant. Both parents were of French Protestant descent. Their forebears had been among the refugees to Germany after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; colony traditions had been kept fairly intact through the fact that the French families were inclined to intermarry; as a result, through the intervening generations rather a marked feeling of pride in their French descent had preserved itself in a satisfying sense of distinction that savored of superiority.

The paternal grandfather, Pierre Barthélemy Fontane, had been successively teacher of painting and drawing to the royal princes and private secretary to Queen Louise before the disaster of Jena. He was then provided for modestly as warden at Nieder-Schönhausen and eventually found himself through three fortunate marriages a comfortable property-owner in Berlin. On the maternal side there was an uncle with a suspiciously German name who had come into possession of a manorial estate. Other facts, as far as they could be followed on German soil, offered no extraordinary basis for family esteem; the paternal great-grandfather was a tinner, as was his father before him; the great-grandfather on the mother's side, a stocking-weaver.[1] Fontane's parents took pleasure, nevertheless, in vying with each other on occasions in claim of family connection, giving imagination free play where fact failed, as Fontane relates with characteristic

[1] Points in regard to the ancestry of Theodor Fontane are taken from the introductory pages of his "Meine Kinderjahre," Autobiographischer Roman, 7. Auflage (Berlin, 1911). Other references to this work will for convenience and uniformity be to vol. II of "Gesammelte Werke," 2. Serie, in which the introductory pages mentioned do not occur. The characterization of Fontane's parents depends largely upon the opening chapters of this work, to which no special references are made.

chuckle in his sketch of his childhood. Speculation went so far, indeed, that Emilie Labry Fontane, in other respects a person of stern common-sense, was convinced in her own mind of connection with Cardinal Fesch, in other words with "nicht mehr und nicht weniger als der Onkel Napoleons."

The parents were opposites and of striking individuality. The eldest son's temperament combined fortunately the rarer qualities of both. The debt that Fontane owed to their personality and their influence he acknowledges most clearly in his autobiography. In answer to the self-imposed question of how he was reared (erzogen), he writes: "not at all and — excellently. . . . What the parents *are*, how they affect us by the very fact of their existence (ihr blosses Dasein), *that* is the determining factor."[1]

The father, whom Fontane fondly terms "ein Original," spent three years at the Gray Cloister *Gymnasium* in Berlin, served as apprentice to an apothecary there from 1809 to the spring of 1813, then at the age of not full seventeen years was one of the first volunteers to respond — rather, as he said, on account of the fascination of the soldier's life than from excessive patriotism — to the proclamation of Frederick William III to his people. From 1814 to 1818 he completed his preparation as apothecary, passed the state examination in 1818, married, and the following year bought the Lion apothecary shop in New Ruppin. But he entered practical life far from manhood's estate in point of development,[2] — a "fantastic visionary," with a passion for newspaper reading, a love of anecdote, and a keen sense of humor, which — among other qualities — his literary son inherited. The humdrum life and the people of the little provincial town bored him, he "gave himself over to more genteel passions" and squandered at cards in the years between 1819 and 1826 a small fortune. He was always more or less a ne'er-do-well, but at the same time in a sense favored by fate. He succeeded in selling the property in New Ruppin in 1826 for twice what he had paid for it,

[1] W, 2, II, 168.

[2] Cf. his own words to his son at the time of Fontane's last visit to him a few months before his death, W, 2, II, 204 f.

settled for ten years, after the better part of a year spent in search of a location to his taste, in the Pomeranian coast town of Swinemünde, was made (as early as 1828) a member of the town council, the sittings of which he never attended, and established his social life equally soon among the best families of the place. Several rapid changes after 1837 brought the family to Berlin. Separation from his wife ensued, and the last twenty years of his life were spent in solitude in Schiffmühle near Freienwalde, where he died in 1867.

Fontane portrays his mother, on the other hand, as rather delicate, sensitive, resolute, unselfish, deeply emotional — except in matters of religion, in which she was a "child of reason" — of distinct social dignity and charm, but practical, stern of principle, often matter-of-fact, not without sarcasm, — on the whole, "ganz Character." Her happiest years were those of her early married life in New Ruppin, to which she returned with her daughter Elise after her separation, surviving her husband by little more than two years.

Except by this sister, Fontane asserts that he was never in any sense dethroned from his mother's affection by the children that followed him. He enjoyed, however, to the end a relation of love and sympathetic understanding with both parents. He says in the story of his life that in much which he was inclined to censure at the time of occurrence he later felt his mother to be wholly right. His father he mentions with deep gratitude for material help freely given to him in the early years in England, upon which rested that modest part in good fortune (des bescheidenen Glückes) that life had in store for him; he writes of him in another connection "noch weit über seine Bonhomie hinaus ging seine Humanität." [1]

Theodor Fontane was born in New Ruppin, December 30, 1819, and entered school there at the age of seven. But his early years were not burdened with study. He was placed in the City School in Swinemünde in 1827, but only for a short time, since his mother, who had remained behind the family for some weeks to recover from a threatened nervous break, decided promptly upon her arrival in the new place of resi-

[1] W, 2, II, 170; cf. also, 46.

dence that he would receive enough harm from his associates and the general atmosphere to outweigh any possible accretion in knowledge. There were then no private teachers to be recommended in Swinemünde and it was consequently decided to let him grow up naturally (wild aufwachsen). He read an hour daily with his mother, and had lessons in Latin and French vocabulary, history, and geography with his father, whose "Socratic method" could not, from Fontane's later accounts, have overtaxed the boy. It seems to have been the attitude of both parents, although Fontane mentions only his mother in this connection, that the only objection to temporary lack of actual schooling was that it was contrary to custom. "Das bisschen Lernen, das war jeden Augenblick wieder einzubringen." [1]

One of the chief families in the town soon imported, however, a certain Dr. Lau as tutor for their son, and Fontane was placed with Wilhelm Krause under his instruction. The self-esteem of the new incumbent was due to two facts: that he was a pupil of Schleiermacher and that he knew "Der westöstliche Diwan" by heart. He possessed also pedagogical tact, and Fontane seems to have remembered him with respect and something of affection. Lau was succeeded in the autumn of 1830 by another theological student, whose hold upon his pupils was less secure, but to whom Fontane acknowledges a debt of gratitude for the fact that he was required under this tutelage to memorize the ballads of Schiller, irrespective of length or of his own intelligent understanding of them. Christmas of 1831 brought him, however, a notable beginning in hand-books for his personal possession, — as family portion, so to speak, for with them came the information that his exodus from family life was near at hand in order that this desultory training might end.[2]

The prospective new experience was eagerly welcomed, but Fontane writes of his childhood, nevertheless, that it was "all poetry." The years had been rich in that preparation for life which no schooling can give. The novel experiences of

[1] Cf. W, 2, II, 148 f., 155.
[2] Cf. W, 2, II, 156 f., 167.

the harbor town, the breath of romance that came to the boy from the mysterious mists, the storm-tossed waves and the unexplored distances beyond them, certain unique associations with his father, the days when the social life of the family reached its most genteel zenith, all fastened themselves upon his memory, spurred his fancy, and quickened his observation. His studies of human nature had their beginnings here. The charm of freedom from the trammels of routine had been tasted. Yet the realization that a reasonable degree of system and stability — some fixed point in the compass — is essential to a balanced life, had not been omitted.

In 1832 Fontane was entered at the *Gymnasium* in New Ruppin, but by this time he was destined for the apothecary's calling, and in 1833 he was transferred to a technical school in Berlin, which differed from the *Gymnasium* in that it offered more science with a smaller requirement in languages. In 1836 he began apprenticeship in the Rose *Apotheke* in Berlin. He did not find preparation for his proposed vocation wholly pleasant, but the appearance from time to time of lyrics and ballads of his fabrication in the *Berliner Figaro*, his "Leib- und Magenblatt," added zest to life. He was, moreover, released from a quarter-year of the customary four years of service, ended the abbreviated period no less fortunately with an examination only twenty minutes in length, and felt that he had launched into life, indeed, when on the same day he found spread upon some pages of the *Figaro* the opening chapters of his first narrative, "Geschwisterliebe," followed by the significant words "to be continued." [1]

The greater part of 1840 he remained with Mr. Rose. The *Apotheke* was, fortunately for him, the center of a reading circle for modern books. His duties were not excessively strenuous, and he writes that all he knew of Young Germany he learned from the books of this circle, from which no one but himself cared to benefit. His introduction by a friend of polytechnic days to the Lenau Club led to the purchase of a volume of Lenau that accompanied him through life. Through a Platen Club he was inspired with admiration

[1] Cf. W, 2, II, 224, 255, 160, 233.

for Platen, and when after these temporary associations he left Berlin in the autumn of 1840 for Burg, he was writing trochees (which in later life, he confesses, he did not dare to read) in imitation of Anastasius Grün.[1]

Two months of typhoid and a period of convalescence at home interrupted his new literary aspirations. In 1841 he took a position with an apothecary in Leipsic and a year of important relationships ensued. Through some members of a Schiller Club, for which he had written a satirical squib, "Shakespeares Strumpf," he was introduced into a Herwegh Club. Here began his acquaintance with Max Müller, whom he met later in England, and his warm friendship with Wilhelm Wolfsohn, a young Jew, even at that time an authority on Russian literature, later editor with Robert Prutz of *Das deutsche Museum* and founder of the *Nordische Revue*.

About Easter, 1842, illness again enforced a vacation of some weeks, after which he took a position with a Dresden apothecary for a year. Returning to Leipsic in 1843 he started with zeal into the study of Greek and Latin, thinking to establish himself as a writer there. Instead, for reasons which he does not explain, he returned home to Berlin in October and in the spring of 1844 presented himself as a volunteer for military service in the Franz Regiment. Hardly had he done so when he applied for a furlough in order to avail himself of an unexpected invitation from Hermann Scherz, an old school friend of New Ruppin, for a trip of two weeks in England. Easter of 1845 found him, nevertheless, absolved of the duty of military service according to the original plan, and Fontane had in addition gained impressions from the brief experience in England which were to determine to some extent the trend of the coming years.[2]

The year 1844 had been of vital importance to Fontane in another way. Through Bernhard von Lepel, a friend of some years' standing and an officer in the Franz Regiment, he had become a member of "Der Tunnel über der Spree," a Sunday afternoon literary club which flourished in Berlin

[1] Cf. W, 2, II, 245, 265, 302.
[2] Cf. W, 2, II, 345 ff., 374, 383 f.

from 1827 to 1877. The Tunnel was originally a club of dilettantes, but during the years of Fontane's membership it had on its contributing lists a number of men who have since made worthy additions to art or to letters. Moritz Graf Strachwitz, Christian Friedrich Scherenberg, Emanuel Geibel, Theodor Storm, and Paul Heyse were among the more prominent creative writers. Felix Dahn, Heinrich Seidel (humorist), Dr. Werner Hahn (literary historian), Richard Lucae (architect), Wilhelm Wolff (sculptor) were also members. Aside from these Fontane there learned to know intimately: Wilhelm von Merckel, always thereafter his benefactor, who gave him that initial connection with the Literary Bureau of the Interior without which his independent start in letters would at least have been delayed; Dr. Franz Kugler, art historian, with whom he later edited the *Argo;* Friedrich Eggers, editor of the *Deutches Kunstblatt,* who first published many of his letters on the London stage; George Hesekiel, whose connection with the *Kreuzzeitung* was to be advantageous to him; Adolf Menzel, one of the leading artists of the century, whom he later acknowledged as a model in point of general artistic tendency. That a man of letters in the making found inspiration in this atmosphere goes without saying. Fontane found in addition, through the fact that his work met a certain degree of approval, just the support he needed at that time, the confidence of men with a basis for judgment. He had previously attempted chiefly poems of freedom in the style of Herwegh, who from Leipsic days had been his pattern. An independent, individual bent had not revealed itself. Through its commendation of his ballads the Tunnel facilitated a decision as to what trend his work should at least temporarily take. He wrote to Storm (1854) the unusually frank and generous admission that he owed it to the Tunnel that he had mounted again the nag (Gaul) on which he belonged.[1]

Although literary interests were naturally from this time constantly more and more engrossing, Fontane's purpose to

[1] For Fontane's full account of the Tunnel cf. "Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig" in W, 2, III; for the letter to Storm, W, 2, X, 107.

sustain himself as an apothecary had not yet been relinquished. In 1845 he served for a time in the *Polnische Apotheke*, where he found a friend and literary sympathizer in his colleague, Friedrich Witte, later for many years a member of the *Reichstag*. He passed his pharmaceutical examination in the summer of 1846, entered the Jung *Apotheke* in 1847, and from June, 1848, to October, 1849, was engaged at *Bethanien* Hospital in preparing nurses for the professional examination in several required subjects. He had written a number of Prussian historical ballads, or as he terms them, "poetische Dichtungen im Volksliedton," [1] well received in the Tunnel, and a ballad-cycle, "Von der schönen Rosamunde," when in 1848 Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry" and Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" fell into his hands, and his own ballad impulse was strengthened.

The decision to risk an independent literary career came near the end of 1849. In November of that year Wolfsohn persuaded Moritz Katz in Dessau to bring out the Rosamond cycle.[2] In 1850 the Prussian ballads appeared as a book, "Männer und Helden," the first edition of collected poems was arranged for, and in October Fontane married Emilie Rouanet-Kummer,[3] to whom he had been betrothed since 1845. He writes to Paul Schlenther (1889) in regard to this first edition of poems that he received for it sufficient remuneration in advance in the summer of 1850 to buy a wedding outfit and perhaps also to pay for the bridal carriage.[4]

If Fontane entered his new career with any illusory hope of rewards that were not hard-won, it must have soon been dispelled. He had dedicated a poem to Count Schwerin in 1849 ("An den Märzminister Graf Schwerin-Putzar") that was never acknowledged, and in 1851, hearing that the king had been pleased with a certain ballad (probably "Der Tag

[1] Cf. W, 2, III, 204, 21.

[2] Cf. "Theodor Fontane's Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm Wolfsohn" (Berlin, 1910); also below, p. 29.

[3] Cf. W, 2, III, 214 f., 206. — As the name Rouanet indicates, Fontane chose his wife from the French colony; Kummer was the name of her guardian and adopted father.

[4] W, 2, XI, 235.

von Hemmingstedt"), he made a petition to him for recognition, to which there was no response.[1] Nor was the struggle to be temporary. A large part of 1852 he spent in London in the vain endeavor to establish in connection with the Prussian ministerial press an English correspondence that would prove lucrative. On his return his main purpose seems to have been to make a mere living, since in addition to editorial work and contributions to various journals he lectured and gave private lessons on a diversity of subjects. The following year he was threatened with a severe break in health; but in 1854 his various activities were resumed and he added to his publications a collection of London letters, "Ein Sommer in London," the fruit of the English experience of two years before. An opportunity for prolonged residence in England came in the autumn of 1855 as a relief. In August, 1858, von Lepel joined him for a trip through Scotland, which resulted within a year in the volume, "Jenseit des Tweed,"[2] eventually also in the "Brandenburg Travels," for the silent appeal of the Scottish Lakes to his deep-seated love for the *Mark* aroused the impulse to reveal in sketches and song the unrealized beauty of the land of his birth and the intrinsic individual worth of its makers. In 1859 the resignation of Manteuffel caused a somewhat summary return to Berlin; the time of his contract was only half over,[3] and he found himself under shadow of the suspicion that rested upon all who had had even minor connection with the ministry.

His period of foreign residence had been long enough, however, to convince him that in spite of his early enthusiasm for England, more particularly for London, he would not wish to leave Germany permanently. From this time on he left Berlin only for brief trips and vacation outings, and so closely

[1] Cf. W, 2, X: 198 (letter to Friedrich Eggers); 33 (letter to Friedrich Witte).

[2] This book is published under the title "Jenseit des Tweed" and is so referred to W, 2, X, 204, footnote; it is entered in the *Register* to W, 2, XI, (496) as "Jenseits des Tweed" and is so referred to W, 2, VI, 98, footnote.

[3] Cf. W, 2, XI, 152; W, 2, III, 139 f.; the whole English period is treated more fully below, p. 5 ff.

is much of his work connected with the life of the Prussian capital, that he has come to be considered the chief literary mirror of Berlin society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In June, 1860, George Hesekiel, the friend mentioned above, in charge of the French correspondence of the *Kreuzzeitung*, was instrumental in securing for him the English correspondence of the same paper, and he entered upon a position, which, although none too congenial in its requirements, made for ten years slight demands upon him owing to a lax interest in English affairs at that time,[1] in which he enjoyed consequently more leisure for his own pursuits than he had ever known. The years resulted in his accounts of the wars of 1864 and 1866 — after some time spent respectively in Denmark and Bohemia — in the preliminary drafts of his only extensive historical novel, in the collection of vast quantities of material on the people and the traditions of Brandenburg province, and in numerous feuilletons in different papers entitled "Studies of the Mark," later to be collected in the volumes, "Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg." The diary makes a bare statement of the fact that in 1867 he received the order of the crown (Kronenorden), probably in recognition of his book on the Danish war. But honors that were not substantial meant little to him. The withdrawal in 1868 of the yearly allowance of three hundred *Taler* that had been granted to him by the *Kultusministerium* left a lasting sting, which a gift of one hundred and thirty *Friedrichs dr'o* by order of the king in 1869 for his volume on the Austro-Prussian war ameliorated but did not remove.[2]

The next two decades of Fontane's life (1870–1890) are those in which dramatic criticism is his basis for fixed remuneration. The first brought the realization of a cherished plan in trips to Italy in 1874 and 1875, on one of which his wife accompanied him. It was darkened to some extent — and more than temporarily — by an attempted secretaryship

[1] W, 2, III, 145; cf. also below, p. 18 f.

[2] Cf. W, 2, X, 296 (1872, letter to Mathilde v. Rohr); the gift mentioned was made in two parts, 1869–70 (cf. below, p. 12, excerpt from *D*).

at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1876; the unpleasantness of extricating himself from this wholly uncongenial position was followed by a severe strain, due to his resignation, in the sympathetic although not always unruffled relation to his wife, at other times in every sense the sharer in his interests and plans, a faithful and unselfish comrade, copyist, and helpmate.[1] Depression and irritation from these causes are counterbalanced in part, however, by joy and satisfaction, which letters both to his wife and to friends reveal, in the development of the children,[2] now growing to maturity. His son Theodor, who developed distinct literary gifts and even considered letters as a profession, passed with credit in 1875 the examination for university matriculation from the French *Gymnasium* in Berlin, on which occasion Fontane wrote him as follows:[3]

"Ich glaube nicht nur, dass Du der erste '*primus omnium*' in der Familie bist, ich bin dessen gewiss. Nach meiner nun durch vier Generationen gehenden Kenntnis zählt es zu den fragwürdigen Vorzügen unsres Geschlechts, dass nie ein Fontane das Abiturientenexamen gemacht, geschweige vorher die Stelle eines *primus omnium* bekleidet hat. Der Durchschnitts-Fontane (wohin von Mutters Seite auch Deine Vettern gerechnet werden können) ist immer aus Oberquarta abgegangen und hat sich dann weiter-geschwindelt, das beste Teil seiner Bildung aus Journalen dritten Ranges zusammenlesend. Ich war schon eine Ausnahme, ein abnormer Zustand, der nun durch Dich seinen Abschluss gefunden hat."

In 1878 the diary notes that "Theo" is preparing for the *Referendar* examination and in 1878 and 1880 that Martha

[1] Cf. W, 2, VI and X (letters of 1874, 1875, 1876).

[2] Of the seven children, three died in early childhood. The other four grew to maturity and three survive their father: the eldest son, George, was at his death in 1887 military instructor in the *Haupt-Kadetten-Anstalt* in Lichterfelde, near Berlin; Theodor has for some years been a councillor in the Ministry of War; Martha, the "Mete" of the letters and the devoted companion of her father's later years, is now Fr. Prof. Fritsch of Berlin; Friedrich, the youngest son, is the well-known publisher of Berlin-Grunewald (Cf. W, 2, VI, 3, 33, 117, notes; X, 155, note).

[3] W, 2, VI, 232; cf. also, VII, 160 f.

(frequently spoken of in the letters to his wife as unusual or gifted) has passed the teacher's examinations.

This decade was one of varied literary products. The first part of it was devoted almost exclusively to the books on the Franco-Prussian war, for which Fontane entertained, as the diary shows, hope of a *Gnade* not in the form of title or order, but in vain.[1] The period brought also the accounts of his personal experiences in collecting material for the war-books and great additions to the "Brandenburg Travels." But it is the work in historic narrative that gives distinctive character to this decade: "Vor dem Sturm," a valuable historical contribution to the understanding of the years 1812–13, came to completion and proved the author's creative power in animating the past, if not his feeling for the essentials of compact narrative form; the *Novelle*, "Grete Minde," based on an old chronicle of Tangermünde, shows mastery of form with even greater plastic, imaginative and poetic power than was revealed in "Vor dem Sturm"; "Schach von Wuthenow," less masterful, but a faithful mirror of the elements of degeneration in the Prussian army before the battle of Jena, the only other completed work in which Fontane attempted an accurate suggestive picture of the past, was planned in this period although not finished until 1882.

In the decade 1880–1890 many preconceived plans — among them the "Brandenburg Travels" — were completed. Fontane refused in 1882 Friedrich Bruckmann's request to write a life of Emperor William I.[2] Interest in the ballad asserted itself strongly in 1889,[2] but the period is marked particularly by an entirely new departure, the realistic novel of Berlin society. This genre was helped to maturity, as it seems from its late appearance, by the prolonged study of localities and people devoted to the "Brandenburg Travels," and by the conviction repeatedly expressed in the dramatic criticism that art needed to draw closer to life. "L'Adultera" and "Cecile" aroused discussion but were not triumphantly convincing. "Irrungen, Wirrungen" proved, however, to the younger

[1] Cf. W, 2, X, 380.
[2] Cf. W, 2, XI, 64 f., 195 f.

generation of seekers after new literary form and method that their iconoclasm should not be universal, that the lines of their search led out, in fact, from the independent artistic conception of this mature writer in their midst who had already embodied in artistic form a related ideal. "Stine" followed in this style. "Graf Petöfy" (not a story of Berlin life), begun in these years, carried this impulse into the 90's, where some of its best products lie.

In Fontane's family life this was a period of various changes. His two older sons married, his first grandchild was born, and in 1887 his eldest son died.[1]

The years following 1890 do not round out a full ten in number, but their fruition is such as the previous decade promised. Many honors came to Fontane at last after long years of somewhat sparing recognition. The festive celebration of his seventieth birthday ushered in the period, bringing with it, because of his dislike of ceremony, more of unrest and depression than of satisfaction. In January, 1890, the *Vossische Zeitung* settled a welcome pension upon him in appreciation of his long and faithful service as theater-critic. He was one of the recipients of the Schiller prize in 1891 in the absence of dramatists equally worthy of recognition. In 1894 the university of Berlin conferred an honorary doctorate upon him.[2] Various new editions of former works appeared, and two of his books were brought out in translation.[3] Nothing seems to have given him as great satisfaction, however, as the appreciation which Julius Rodenberg expressed of the honor that his name brought to the *Deutsche Rundschau.* In addition to his own words of regard Rodenberg wrote him that Conrad Ferdinand Meyer considered "Unwiederbringlich" the best novel in point of art form that the *Rundschau* had ever published and commended it further for delicate psychological treatment, life-likeness, and its ever-present touch of poetry. Fontane's reply was that he had waited

[1] Cf. W, 2, VII, 134 f., 136 f., 141 f., 154, 157 f.

[2] Cf. W, 2, XI, 242, 262 f., 332 (and note).

[3] Cf. above, p. xvi; the diary notes also (1871) in regard to "Kriegsgefangen": "Macht Glück, wird unter anderm ins Russische übersetzt."

a life-time, or at any rate since 1876, when he resigned his position at the Academy of Arts, for such recognition, "und es wollte nicht kommen. . . . Nun, im Erfüllungsmoment 'muss wohl ein armer Teufel sterben.'" [1]

But other laurels awaited him. This, too, was a period of undiminished productivity. Different phases of work reached their zenith: the realistic novel touched with romanticism, in "Effi Briest"; the satiric narrative of the Berlin bourgeoisie, in "Frau Jenny Treibel"; the ripe character study set against a political background, in the last narrative, "Der Stechlin." Besides, new poems and ballads appeared, and volumes of autobiography and reminiscence rounded out for posterity a life of constant, keen, but sane interest, and courageous industry. These done, Fontane contemplated a return to the "gods of earlier years," to romance and studies of Brandenburg. He wrote with enthusiasm of prospective work on East-Frisian material, "Die Likedeeler," that he had picked up in the course of a summer outing ten years before; again, September 17, 1898, of a plan to treat "Das Ländchen Friesack und die Bredows," for which he had been collecting material since 1889.[2] These and a number of other works were found in his desk in various stages of completion when death surprised him three days later. They bear evidence that in spite of his seventy-nine years his creative faculty was as fresh as his humor and his sympathy with youth.

[1] W, 2, XI, 259 f.; cf. also, 340 f.

[2] Cf. W, 2, XI, 344 f., 472 f.; also, 499 (Register).

THEODOR FONTANE
AS A CRITIC OF THE DRAMA

CHAPTER I

Conditions Attending Fontane's Criticism of the Drama

"Das *Leben* ist nie langweilig und in seiner künstlerischen Darstellung am wenigsten." (Theodor Fontane — June 21, 1878.)[1]

The only point from which to reach a just estimate of any result is that which keeps in view two things: the purpose of the producer, and the conditions under which he worked. These fundamental restrictions have perhaps more than ordinary bearing upon Theodor Fontane's dramatic criticism. He was not a critic who wandered at will in the highways and by-ways of books. The impelling force of earning a comfortable livelihood for himself and his family was always behind him. Only in his creative work — the poems, ballads, novels, and prose tales — did he enjoy a certain freedom from transmuting into material maintenance the opportunity which the moment offered; and that degree of freedom, which he enjoyed there, he earned in large part in the servitude of occasional criticism.

The business of making literature for the sake of daily bread was distasteful to him, as to all men of creative bent. The feverish quest of news was not his idea of journalism.[2]

[1] *L* — From Berlin to his wife.

[2] Dec. 5, 1855, he wrote to his wife (*L*) from London: "Zum Teil bleiben wir auch mit *allerneuesten Nachrichten*, die uns so rasch nicht

But the new announcements in the publishers' lists, current events, and his own more serious literary pursuits always prescribed his reading to a great extent. He writes to Mathilde von Rohr (Jan. 1869) that it is necessarily confined to the work he has in hand.[1] In thanking Wilhelm Hertz (Dec. 1878) for Heyse's translation of Giacomo Leopardi he writes that it is beautiful without and within, but that he leafed it through with pain, not on Leopardi's account, but for purely egoistic reasons, since in the treadmill of service and daily work he cannot even *read* that sort of book, except in summer, when for a few weeks he turns his back upon regular pursuits.[2]

zugänglich sind, hinter unseren Rivalen zurück; lauter Umstände, die *Dr. Metzels* Laune eben nicht golden machen. — Die Sache liegt nämlich so. Ich bin nie und nimmer der Meinung gewesen, dass es uns glücken würde, hinsichtlich *neuester Nachrichten* mit unseren Collegen concurriren zu können, ja, ich habe im Oktober eigens erklärt, dass das unmöglich sei. Ich habe die Ansicht gehabt, dass es sich um die Verfechtung und Vertretung eines *Prinzips* handle, und dass es darauf ankomme, vernünftige, wohl überlegte Dinge zu sagen, aber es war mir fremd, dass eine Hetzjagd in Bezug auf Neuigkeiten angestellt werden soll."

[1] W, 2, X, 258 f.

[2] W, 2, X, 396. — Various diary entries also show that browsing was a luxury to Fontane. From 1872, for example, there is a paragraph indicating that the range of his reading had previously excluded much, known certainly to men of letters and to many casual readers as well:

"Meine Lektüre von Neujahr bis Ende März war Willibald Alexis. Im April — zur Unterbrechung meiner Kriegsbuch-Arbeit — schrieb ich einen biographisch-kritischen Aufsatz über W. Alexis für Rodenbergs 'Salon.' Ende Mai reiste Emilie nach Neuhof; am 6. Juli ich und der ganze Haushalt nach Krummhübel. Sehr schöne Zeit. Viel gelesen: *Heinrich von Kleists* sämmtliche Dramen und Erzählungen, *Jean Pauls* Katzenbergers Badereise, *Achim von Arnims* Essay über Volkslieder und die Kronenwächter."

From 1873 there is another of similar character:

"Im Juli auf 7 Wochen nach Gross Tabartz in Thüringen. . . . In Tabartz viel gelesen: Tristram Shandy, Sentimental Journey, Schopenhauer, Schiller-Goethe Briefwechsel."

From 1877 there is an entry indicating that even vacation reading had a definite purpose behind it.

What may be termed Fontane's real activity in the line of dramatic criticism falls into two periods of very unequal length. The first is the period of his residence in London as official correspondent [1] for the *Preussische Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*, organs of the Prussian Ministry, and belongs to the first decade of his independent literary life, when he was known — and by no means widely — only as a writer of ballads and other verse.[2] "Die Londoner Theater," reports on Shakspere as produced on the London stage, were originally some of the feuilletons [3] on English conditions contributed (1855–1859) to home papers. The second is the period of reports for the *Vossische Zeitung* on the Royal Theater of Berlin and covers, with but two short breaks, a sweep of almost twenty years (1870–1889). At its beginning his "Wanderungen" and the books on the Danish war (1864) and the Austro-Prussian war (1866) had already added to the reputation of the ballad-writer. At its end he had gained distinct popularity as "Brandenburg Traveler," and had added to his literary achievements success in the realistic novel. He did not yet occupy that unique position which he held a year later [4] as the sole representative of his own literary generation honored by the young iconoclast stage reformers, Holz, Schlaf, Gerhart Hauptmann, Otto Brahm, and Paul

"Juni und Juli war ich sehr fleissig und beendigte den 3. Band meines Romans, war nun aber so herunter, dass ich aus Berlin fortmusste. Ich ging in den Harz. In Thale (auf Partien, die tötlich langweilig sind, verzichtete ich) machte ich die Correctur des 3. Bandes und beschränkte mich darauf, um 5 Uhr Nachmittage in den 'Waldkater' zu gehen und hier bei Thee und Milch und während die Bode unmittelbar in meinem Rücken brauste, Walter Scott zu lesen und zwar den 'Alterthümler.'"

The novel referred to here is "Vor dem Sturm," which appeared in 1878. In 1866 he said that he had had the material in mind for ten years, and spoke of dependence on Scott in a general way in his work upon it (W, 2, X, 246, 252; cf. also Appendix, creative work, 1863).

[1] W, 2, VI, 1.

[2] Cf. Appendix, previous to 1855.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 455.

[4] Erich Schmidt, "Theodor Fontane. Ein Nachruf" (*Deutsche Rundschau*, Nov. 1898, 270–283).

Schlenther; but his work in realistic narrative and his appreciative criticisms of Ibsen's technic had prepared the way for this distinction.

In addition to the criticism in fulfilment of definite obligations through a period of almost two score years, both letters and feuilletons flowed freely from his pen. The most lengthy discussions of drama found in the letters are with reference to the Free Stage, but many other bits are of importance because of the spontaneity for which Fontane's letters stand. The vast number of scattered feuilletons come into consideration only in a limited way, since they were in large part on subjects not connected with drama. In all, the dramatic criticism represents a development of thirty-five years, beginning with what is usually considered the prime of life, closing when Fontane's own creative power had, in spite of his seventy years, not yet reached its zenith. Because of this continuity and the rare phenomenon of his late development, there is no other single line of his work and interest that affords as complete a basis for judging his general growth in esthetic conviction as this.

For the early dramatic criticism, spasmodic in nature as compared with the later work, a clear perspective is best secured through a review of some of the facts of Fontane's life from 1850 to 1860. He married in October, 1850, on the prospect of a position in the Literary Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior.[1] His autobiographical sketches, which reach only to this point, close, however, with the statement that "after a month and a half his whole ecomonic basis, the Literary Bureau, was in the air, and he again upon a stormy sea."

The year 1851 was difficult. He writes to Friedrich Witte:[2]

"Fest entschlossen bin ich, mich nicht zu verkaufen und werde mich weder durch Not noch durch Tränen davon abbringen lassen; schlimmstenfalls muss ich sehen, als Abschreiber oder überhaupt als *Hand*arbeiter mein Brot zu verdienen."

[1] W, 2, III, 294, 299.
[2] W, 2, X, 38 f.

In February, 1852, shortly before leaving to try his fortunes in London, he wrote to Wolfsohn, advising him against Berlin.[1] Competition, he says, is incredible, and exceeded only by a niggardliness in praise and recognition that deprives one of the spirit necessary for existence.

London conditions, too, were by no means encouraging.[2] He had been sent to England on an indefinite arrangement, and the publications he represented kept him unsettled in regard to the future.[3] He seems to have received no fixed salary for his work in the beginning. A letter of July 20 reveals the fact that through a successful interview on the part of his wife with Dr. Quehl, the press manager in Berlin, they were again assured of the 40 Reichstaler, on the prospect of which they had married. Nevertheless Fontane expressed very decidedly the wish to remain temporarily in England, and considered various means to make this possible on a basis independent of the ministerial press. Bunsen, the Prussian ambassador at the English court, attempted to secure a professorship for him at Cambridge or Oxford.[4] A

[1] "Theodor Fontanes Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm Wolfsohn" (Berlin 1910), 92.

[2] Yet the exhilaration lacking in Berlin he seems to have found at first in London. He wrote to his wife (*L* — dated, 2. Pfingsttag; the year is omitted, but the letter was with those of 1852 and agrees with them in content): "Man stürze sich in diesen Menschenstrudel, der sich London nennt, und die Seele kehrt frisch, wie aus einem Bade, immer wieder zu ihrem Tagewerk zurück." — Again (d. 14. Juni, 1854): "*Ich hätte dir London gern gezeigt;* denn wiewohl mir nicht allzuviel hier geglückt ist, bleib' ich doch nach wie vor dabei: es ist das Grösste was diese Erde hat."

[3] He wrote to his wife (*L* — July 12, 1852): "Ich dachte mal ein anerkennendes oder zustimmendes Wort über meine Artikel zu hören, statt dessen steht in jedem Briefe: sie sind noch nicht gedruckt. Auf der anderen Seite kann ich mir wieder nicht denken, dass man sie absolut unbedeutend findet, man würde sonst bereits Anstalten getroffen haben, mich von hier abzuberufen. . . . Im Uebrigen ist mein Geld total consumirt, da ich von Mr. Hudson noch nichts erhalten habe und mich weder melden kann noch mag. . . . Ich hoffe, dass du im Stande bist, mir was zu schicken."

[4] W, 2, VI, 12, 17–25.

school position was also hoped for,[1] and as a last resort he considered the possibility of establishing himself on a secure basis as an apothecary.[2] But all these plans failed, and he finally returned home in November to take up his earlier position on the staff of the *Preussische Zeitung*, supplementing this activity with lessons in the English language and courses of lectures on English literature and his experience and impressions in England.

In September, 1855, he was sent back to London to establish a German-English correspondence for the promotion (Unterstützung) of Prussian political interests. This stay lasted till January, 1859, broken only by brief visits home in the fall of 1856 and the spring of 1857.[3] The first year and a half — the period of the Shakspere reports — was again a time of unrest, of strenuous demands and anxious uncertainty as to the permanency of the new undertaking.[4] In January, 1857, conditions improved. There was an increase in salary, and in July his family joined him for the remainder

[1] He writes to his wife (*L* — August 23, 1852): "Die Sachen stehen in diesem Augenblick wieder gut. Es ist sehr leicht möglich, dass ich an der City School (eine Art Gymnasium) deutscher Lehrer werde mit wenigstens 50£ jährlich Gehalt. . . . Das Eine halte fest, wenn auch wieder mein Hoffen und Harren hier umsonst sein sollte — *das Geld ist nicht weggeschmissen.*"

[2] W, 2, VI, 27 f.

[3] W, 2, VI, 36, 66, 90.

[4] He writes to his wife (*L* — Dec. 5, 1855): "Ich habe schon manchmal in meinem Leben gearbeitet, aber die gegenwärtige Büffelei übertrifft alles. . . . Jetzt gehören auch die Sonntage der Arbeit (Redactions-Briefe, Buchführung, Lektüre der Sonntagsblätter etc.) und von Besuch eines Theaters ist gar nicht mehr die Rede. Glaube nicht, dass das dem Geiste Nahrung gibt, dass man irgend etwas dabei lernt; man wird flinker, kriegt Routine, das ist alles; im Uebrigen wird man jeden Tag mit Gottes und der Zeitungen Hilfe dümmer. So liegen die Sachen, nicht eben erbaulich. Es gäbe doch ein Zauberwort, das alles doch aus Grau in Rosa zu färben; wenn *Metzel* schriebe: 'ich bin mit Ihrer letzten Wochenarbeit zufrieden; ich soll Ihnen gleichzeitig die Anerkennung des Ministerpräsidenten ausdrücken; einzelne Zeitungen fangen an regelmässig Ihre Correspondenz zu benutzen; wir sind entschlossen es ein Jahr lang fortzusetzen; schreiben Sie Ihrer Familie, dass es Zeit sei zur Uebersiedlung etc.' Aber solch Brief wird nicht eintreffen."

of his stay.[1] But the reports on the London theaters took first form against the darker background.[2]

The mere fact that Fontane collected and rearranged these reports a year and a half after the first writing shows that his

[1] W. 2, VI, 76, 91.

[2] Again letters to his wife bear testimony (These excerpts are all from *L*; the only reference to the Shakspere reports in the published letters occurs in a letter to Friedrich Eggers, August 31, 1857, in regard to the publication of an article on Macbeth — W, 2, X, 176 f.):

Sept. 16, 1855: . . . "Mit Mühe rappelte ich mich gegen 5 Uhr heraus und trottete bis weit in die Oxford-Strasse hinein, wo in einer Quergasse, auf einer Bühne 2ten oder 3ten Ranges, Shakespeares Richard III aufgeführt wurde. Es war die letzte Vorstellung, und wenn ich sie nicht sah, so war sie mir für immer verloren. . . . Ich werde nun auf einer 3ten und wenn ich Glück habe auf einer 4ten Vorstadt-Bühne, Shakespearesche Stücke aufführen sehen und dann 3 oder 4 Briefe über diesen Gegenstand an's Kunstblatt schicken."

Feb. 13, 1857: . . . "Wenn ich dazu komme, diesem Briefe einen Aufsatz über den 'Sommernachtstraum' beizulegen, so sei so freundlich, denselben noch am selben Tage oder spätestens am Dienstag abzuschreiben. . . . Wenn die Kreuz-Zeitung es dann nicht druckt oder vielleicht es kürzt, so hab' ich dann doch Deine Abschrift. Ich will nämlich einen grossen Aufsatz über die Shakespeare-Aufführungen in London schreiben, ähnlich wie über die Wochenblätter."

Feb. 20, 1857: . . . "Zunächst bitte ich Dich die Aufsätze herauszuschicken, die ich im Herbst 55 für's Kunstblatt von hier aus geschrieben habe 1) über Heinrich VIII, 2) Richard III, 3) Hamlet und 4) Sturm." Reference is to the *Deutsches Kunstblatt, Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst, Baukunst und Kunstwerke, Organ der Kunstvereine von Deutschland.* It was published in Berlin as a Thursday weekly, and edited by Friedrich Eggers, a friend of Fontane. Fontane's letters on the London theaters appeared anonymously in the supplement, *Literatur Blatt*, under the general title "Shakespere auf der modernen englischen Bühne" as follows:

Nov. 1, 1855, Erster Brief — Heinrich VIII im Prinzess-Theater.
Nov. 15, 1855, Zweiter Brief — Richard III im Soho-Theater.
Nov. 29, 1855, Dritter Brief — Hamlet im Sadlers-Wells-Theater.
Dec. 27, 1855, Vierter Brief — Der Sturm im Sadlers-Wells-Theater.
Oct. 2, 1856, Fünfter Brief — Antonius und Cleopatra.
Apr. 16, 1857, Sechster Brief — Die beiden Edelleute von Verona — im Sadlers-Wells Theater. Siebenter Brief — König Heinrich IV (Erster Teil).
Apr. 30, 1857, Achter Brief — Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor; — Die Komödie der Irrungen.
June 11, 1857, Neunter Brief — Coriolan.

interest in the subject, a comparison of German and English methods in presenting the Shaksperean plays, continued. Yet there is no evidence other than this that he attached any great importance to this work. In presenting the material to the public a second time, he makes no claim for it and that of the companion essays except its treatment of comparatively new themes.[1] Comparison with the book form shows that the letters on the theater, as printed in the *Literatur Blatt*, had in some places been greatly abbreviated. The content, in so far as given in both, is, however, largely identical, and the point of departure for the criticism of the individual plays is never changed. The chief difference lies in the fact that in the combined essay the performances are treated — for the sake of unity — under the subdivisions of the several theaters, as the main title, "Die Londoner Theater," would suggest. Fontane attributes the appearance of the new volume to his desire to rescue his honest efforts from the oblivion that is the usual fate of newspaper articles; but it is with the admission that there is always involved in the revival of such things the question whether form and content justify giving them new life or whether the decree must be to let the dead rest.

His attitude toward his prose work in general was in the early years one of indifference. In 1849, when he decided at all costs upon a literary career, he took his stand, in spite of discouragingly small receipts, on the basis of verse in the main.[2] He argued that if he wrote a poem, he added the poem to his possessions at least, that a poem that was only

[1] W, 2, VIII, 455. This introduction was written for the volume, "Aus England (Studien und Briefe über Londoner Theater, Kunst und Presse)," which appeared in 1860. It included in addition to the division on the London stage, a lengthy report of the Manchester Art Exhibition, a chapter on the London weeklies and one on the dailies. The section on art gives attention to Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough; the historic painters with emphasis on Benjamin West; the genre-painters, especially David Wilkie and Landseer; the landscape artists, with emphasis upon Turner. All of these subjects are connected, therefore, with the reference to new themes.

[2] W, 2, III, 291 f.

fair was worth something, whereas an essay was likely never to be wanted; but at the bottom of his reasoning lay, of course, a deep-seated preference for verse. He had, too, the conviction that his natural gift was in this line, although he was conscious that he lacked the lyric temperament which makes a great poet.[1] As late, indeed, as 1882, he wrote to his wife of the comparative value of his early prose and verse:[2]

"Ich sehe jetzt klar ein, dass ich eigentlich erst beim 70er Kriegsbuche und dann bei dem Schreiben meines Romans ein *Schriftsteller* geworden bin; d. h. ein Mann, der sein Metier als eine *Kunst* betreibt, als eine Kunst, deren *Anforderungen* er kennt. . . . In *poetischen* Dingen hab' ich die Erkenntnis 30 Jahre früher gehabt als in der Prosa; daher lese ich meine Gedichte mit Vergnügen oder doch ohne Verlegenheit, während meine Prosa aus derselben Zeit mich beständig geniert und erröten macht."

On the other hand, it was characteristic of Fontane not to underestimate his work. One of the chief sustaining forces in his struggle in the literary world was confidence in his ability. He writes to his wife from London concerning the anxiety he notes in his mother's letters in regard to his future.[3]

"Die gute Alte schreibt mir so herzlich, so liebevoll, so opferbereit, wie immer; dennoch hat ihre stete Hoffnungslosigkeit nicht nur was Niederdrückendes sondern auch was Verletzendes. Ich bin

[1] W, 2, X, 107 f. He wrote to Storm (Feb. 14, 1854): "Das Lyrische ist sicherlich meine schwächste Seite, besonders dann, wenn ich aus mir selber und nicht aus einer von mir geschaffenen Person heraus, dies und das zu sagen versuche."

W, 2, VI, 81. He wrote to his wife (Jan. 8, 1857): "Ich bin gewiss eine dichterische Natur, mehr als tausend andre, die sich selber anbeten, aber ich bin keine *grosse* und keine *reiche* Dichternatur. Es drippelt nur so. Der einzelne Tropfen mag ganz gut und klar sein; aberes ist und bleibt nur ein Tropfen, kein Strom, auf dem die Nationen fahren und hineinsehn in die Tiefe und in das himmlische Sonnenlicht, das sich drin spiegelt."

[2] W, 2, VII, 17 f.

[3] *L* — June 14, 1852.

nicht in der Laune, hier auf meinem Stübchen den Prahler zu spielen, und fühle in Demut, dass man ohne Gottes Beistand immer verloren ist. Aber nach *menschlicher* Berechnung liegt kein Grund vor, warum ich zum Verhungern ausersehen sein soll. Ich weiss wie viel mir fehlt, aber ich weiss auch, dass ich in der langen Reihe derer, die von ihrer Feder und ihren Kenntnissen leben, lange nicht der dümmste und erbärmlichste bin."

There is evidence also, that his contributions to the papers were "ehrliche Arbeit,"[1] and that he himself held them superior to the daily mass of feuilletonistic work.[2]

"Seit dem 12ten hab' ich in der Tat für die Vossin nicht mehr geschrieben. Ich ärgerte mich über einige dumme Bemerkungen und muss noch jetzt sagen, dass ich ein Recht dazu hatte. Ich kann mich nicht mehr wie den ersten besten kleinen Krüger traktiren lassen. Ich verlange, dass eine Redaktion den Unterschied fühlt und anerkennt, der zwischen einem Feuilleton von mir und den gewöhnlichen Machwerken (einzelne glänzende Ausnahmen gern zugegeben) existiert und wenn sie das nicht kann oder will, so passen wir nicht zusammen."

Moreover, the subject involved gave the work value; the opportunity to see Shakspere in England was unusual and constituted no small factor in the advantages offered by the foreign experience. Although Fontane took a pharisaic attitude on the whole toward things academic, because of their deadening influence upon personality, yet he realized that his tools were none too well whetted for the vocation he had chosen. His best training had been as an apothecary. He had taken his place behind the prescription counter early, and entertained afterward a plan that did not prove feasible for returning to the school desk.[3] He welcomed the stay in

[1] Cf. W. 2, VI, 76 (1856); Fontane used the term "ehrliche Arbeit" in his introduction to "Die Londoner Theater" (1860); cf. W, 2, VIII, 455.

[2] *L* — This letter is not dated, but is with those to Mrs. Fontane and follows immediately one of July 25, 1856. The published letters for this month and year throw no light upon the opening sentence of the excerpt.

[3] "Briefwechsel" (Wolfsohn), 16 (1843).

England, therefore, as a life-apprenticeship,[1] and in this education, somewhat novel for that time, it is the performances of Shakspere that call forth his greatest enthusiasm. He writes:[2]

"Die Shakespeare-Vorstellungen interessieren mich lebhaft und ich habe die ganze Woche Briefe über die Aufführungen des 'Hamlet' und des 'Sturm' geschrieben. Heute Abend sehe ich den 'Othello' in einem Vorstadttheater. Noch andere Vorstellungen stehen in Aussicht. Diese Theaterabende sind das beste, was ich bisjetzt gehabt habe."

The fact that he planned to unite all the reports a year and a half later, and finally brought them out in book form the year after he returned to Berlin, indicates not only that his interest continued, but that he regarded this part of his work as one of the most valuable fruits of the English period.

Fontane's regular work as critic began ten years later, when he was engaged by the *Vossiche Zeitung* to report on the Royal Stage. His work opened with an account of "Wilhelm Tell," given on August 17, 1870, the day after the

[1] He wrote to his wife from London (*L* — June 14, 1852): "Das Leben hier ist grossartig, anregend und lehrreich im höchsten Maasse, ist aber zu gleicher Zeit auch ungemütlich, und gelegentlich sogar trostlos und niederdrückend. . . . Es entbehrt wahrer Herzlichkeit und Gemütlichkeit, die am Ende für einen Deutschen keine Luxusartikel sind — aber es wäre ungerecht solch Leben deshalb ein schlechtes und trauriges zu nennen. . . . Es würde trostlos sein, so immer leben zu müssen, aber auf Monate, die noch dazu eine *Schulzeit* sein sollen, ist es am Ende auszuhalten, wenn man nicht eine besonders dicke Sentimentalitäts-Ader im Leibe hat. Ich bin zu Zeiten sehr traurig gewesen, aber nie weil ich mich in meiner Isoliertheit kreuz-unglücklich gefühlt hätte, sondern immer nur, wenn mich die Furcht anwandelte: 'am Ende ist alles vergeblich gewesen und Du kehrst nach Berlin gerad' so zurück wie Du weggegangen bist — ein Halbgelehrter oder noch weniger.' Die Furcht mag in meinen Briefen mit durchgeschimmert und dem Ganzen das Ansehen gegeben haben, *als ging*' es mir schlecht; die Wahrheit von der Sache war aber die: ich *fühlte mich schlecht;* nicht Aeusserliches fehlte mir, sondern nur Hoffnung und Mut lagen in mir danieder."

[2] To his wife from London (*L* — Oct. 27, 1855).

triumph of the Germans at Vionville. The one all-consuming interest — the war — dulled enthusiasm for dramaturgy, and only weekly reports followed up to the middle of September.[1] Fontane had in the meantime been commissioned to write a book on the war, and left for the scene of action September 27, only to be arrested as a spy soon after by the French. He was released late in November to find that his experience had gained him not a little newspaper-fame, and resumed his theater reports on December 14th.[2]

[1] According to a statement in script entered by Fontane in the collection made by him of his criticisms as they had appeared in the daily papers — (cf. above, p. xvii).

[2] The date of resuming this work is again entered by him by hand in his folio-collection of his criticisms. Various letters referring to his experience in France are found, W, 2, VI. The request for a third war-book came to him from R. v. Decker (W, 2, VI, 174, 184), printer in ordinary to the court. Decker had published the earlier war-books of Fontane also, and these had had some recognition from the throne, as the following entry in the diary under the general heading "1870" shows:

"Geh. Rath Hahn eroberte mir eine Unterstützung seitens des Ministers des Innern; die Voss. Ztng. engagierte mich, an des alten Gubitz Stelle, als Referenten über die Königlichen Schauspiele. Anfang Juli überreichte Geh. Kab. Rath v. Wilmowski S. M. dem Könige den 2. Halbband meines 66er Kriegsbuches, wofür ich abermals ein Geschenk von 50 Friedrichsd'or erhielt. Es brachte grosse Freude ins Haus und heiteren Sinnes reisten wir, die Wohnung zuschliessend, am 12. Juli von hier ab, um 4 Wochen in Warnemünde zuzubringen. Aber schon am 15. erfolgte die Kriegserklärung Frankreichs. Ein ungeheurer Lärm brach los, dessen Wellen wir selbst in dem stillen Warnemünde verspürten."

That Fontane did not wish to sever his connection with *V. Z.* through the absence necessitated by the quest of material for his new book is evident from a stray letter found among the unpublished letters to the family. It is uncertain to whom this was addressed, probably — in the opinion of Mr. Friedrich Fontane — to Dr. Herm. Kletke, editor-in-chief of *V. Z.* It reads:

"Besançon d. 25. Oktober, 1870.

Hochgeehrter Herr Doctor.

Sie werden möglicherwise schon wissen, dass ich in Domrémy, zu Füssen der Jungfrau von Orleans, verhaftet worden und von Ort zu Ort geschafft worden bin bis hierher. Ich hoffe hier auf Freiheit; das Zünglein in der Wage hat lange geschwankt und erst seit gestern steht

The only other break of any considerable length in his long period of service as critical reporter occurred five years later, when through the kind offices of personal friends interested in art he was made first secretary of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. The position did not prove to his taste and he resigned it after a few months to resume independent literary pursuits and the reports on the theater.[1]

es fest, dass ich nach Roche-sur-Yon, einer Stadt von etwa 9000 Einwohnern in der Vendée, geschafft werden soll."

"Ich habe ein Sentiment, dass der Friede ziemlich nahe ist und möchte deshalb den Wunsch ausgesprochen haben, dass mir die Berichterstattung über die K. Schauspiele verbleibt; es wird nicht schwer halten einen Stellvertreter zu finden. Dazu kommt, dass das Theater, so lange der Krieg dauert, nur ein untergeordnetes Interesse bietet. Geht dies aber alles nicht, oder hegen Sie die Ansicht, dass der Friede noch weit sein kann, so werd' ich es allerdings nur begreiflich finden können, wenn Sie sich nach einem andern Berichterstatter umsehen."

[1] The diary entry (under 1876) concerning this position at the Academy of Arts is as follows: "Am 15. Januar fragte mich Zoellner, auf einer grossen Reunion bei Heydens, ob ich wohl geneigt sein würde, an Stelle des jüngst verstorb. Prof. Gruppe, die Stelle eines ersten Sekretairs der Akademie der Künste anzunehmen? Ich sagte 'ja.' Lucae focht darauf die Sache durch, und am 6. März, nachdem ich unmittelbar vorher meine Bestallung erhalten hatte, wurde ich in mein neues Amt eingeführt. Ich fand es von Anfang an miserabel, schleppte mich aber bis Ende Mai hin, wo mir der Geduldsfaden riss. Ich hatte eine Scene im Senat, und reichte am andern Tage meinen Abschied ein. Nach langen, langweiligen und kämp fereichen Wochen, in denen ich die Menschennatur nicht von ihrer glänzendsten Seite kennen lernte, erhielt ich am 2. August meine Entlassung, die schon am 17. Juli vom Kaiser bewilligt war. . . . Am 1. Nov. fing ich an, energisch an meinem Roman zu arbeiten, nachdem ich am 1. Okt. wieder als Referent für das K. Theater bei der Vossin eingetreten war. . . . Eine Reise machte ich in diesem Jahre *nicht*, weder Zeit, noch Geld, noch Stimmung waren dazu vorhanden." (For further reference to Zöllner and Lucae, cf. W, 2, VI, 141, 142; X and XI. The novel referred to here is "Vor dem Sturm" — cf. above, p. 2, n. 2.)

In addition to this break in Fontane's criticism due to the temporary secretaryship at the Academy of Arts, there were briefer intermissions almost yearly due to variable health. Physical limitations had to be combated throughout his whole career. As early as 1853 he wrote to Wolfsohn that a cough of six months' persistence had ranked him as a tubercular. ("Briefwechsel," 105). In 1861 he writes of a long period

The letters on the London stage have at least this advantage over the work of the later period that the choice of subject is not only spontaneous, but based solely on deep interest in the master-poet of Avon. The list of plays upon which the later reports are made shows,[1] on the contrary, that the

of ill health during which his work suffered (W, 2, VI, 116). The years 1882 and 1883 were particularly unfruitful because of illness (W, 2, VII, 1). Excerpts from the diary for 1870, 1873, and 1877 are respectively as follows:

"Bis Mitte Februar verging alles leidlich, dann wurde ich krank, eine böse, endlose Grippe, eine wahre Geduldsprobe, die mich über 10 Wochen lang zu jeder Arbeit unfähig machte."

"Die Wintermonate vergehen wie gewöhnlich, unter Arbeit, Gesellschaftsmajonaise und Krankheit."

"Am 13. Jan., wieder auf einem Heydenschen Ball, erkrankte ich und war ein paar Wochen lang am Arbeiten gehindert. Dann hielt ich mich bis Ende März und beendigte in dieser Zeit den 2. Band meines Romans. Nun aber kam Krankheit; ich wurde recht elend und war erst Mitte Mai wieder leidlich im Gange."

[1] The following averages are based on data (1871–1889) concerning the Royal Theater of Berlin from "Statistischer Rückblick auf die Königlichen Theater zu Berlin, Hannover, Cassel und Wiesbaden, 1867–1881, 1882–1889" (Berlin, Druck von A. W. Hayns Erben). In making up these averages the years 1870 and 1876 have been omitted entirely, since they were years of little critical activity on Fontane's part. The greater number of inferior playwrights have been omitted from the following list altogether, if their hold upon the repertoire of the Royal Stage was either strictly ephemeral, spasmodic, or persistently so small as to be practically negligible.

Average no. of performances yearly, 280–290, not including opera.

Average no. of plays presented yearly, 82, ranging from 51–110.

Bauernfeld, Eduard von, 2–14 performances yearly, 15 yrs.

Benedix, Roderich, average of 20 performances yearly (4–10 plays), 18 yrs.; lowest no. (11), 1883; highest (50), 1871.

Birch-Pfeiffer, Charlotte, 1–10 performances yearly, 18 yrs.

Brachvogel, Albert E., average of 5 performances yearly, 16 yrs.; 1874, 19; "Narziss" given every year 1878–1888.

Byron, "Manfred" given 4 times, 1877.

Calderon, 2–5 performances yearly, 5 yrs. (last 3 yrs. consecutive).

Erckmann-Chatrian, "Die Rantzau" given 25 times, 1883, and 3–6 times each year after, except 1886.

Freytag, Gustav, average of 4 performances yearly, 18 yrs.; 1886, 15.

Geibel, Emanuel, 2–6 performances yearly, 1883–1888.

chaff in the provender offered the critic could tend only to choke critical zest. A greater number of the performances

Gensichen, Otto F., average of 6 performances yearly, 14 yrs.; 1881, 23.

Goethe, 236 performances in all: average, 13 yearly, 18 yrs.; 1887, 20.

Gottschall, Rudolf von, 3–7 performances yearly, 5 yrs. (between 1872 and 1879).

Grillparzer, Franz, average of 3 performances yearly, 10 yrs.

Gutzkow, Karl F., 2–8 performances yearly, 12 yrs.; "Uriel Acosta," 9 times in 1879 and from 2–4 times almost every year after.

Hebbel, Friedrich, 2 performances, 1874.

Heyse, Paul, rare up to 1882; after that, average of 12 performances yearly, ranging 6–32; "Die Weisheit Salomos," 21 times, 1888.

Hillern, Wilhelmine von, 18 performances, 1882; after that, 2–10 yearly up to 1889.

Ibsen, "The Lady from the Sea" given 15 times, 1889.

Iffland, August W., average of 5 performances yearly (ranging 1–11), 14 yrs.

Kleist, Heinrich von, average of 5 performances yearly, 17 yrs.; "Hermannsschlacht" given 25 times, 1875.

Kotzebue, August F. von, very occasional.

Laube, Heinrich, 1–9 performances yearly, 9 yrs., but with long pauses when nothing was given.

Lessing, average of 9 performances yearly (ranging 6–14), 18 yrs.

Lindau, Paul, average of 13 performances yearly, 16 yrs.; 1880, 47.

Lindner, Albert, 17 performances in all, 1883.

Ludwig, Otto, 2 performances of "Erbförster" (1, 1881; 1, 1882).

Molière, 34 performances in all, spasmodically.

Mosenthal, Salomon von, 1–4 performances yearly, 8 yrs.

Moser, Gustav von, 302 performances in all: average of 16 yearly, 18 yrs.; 1872, 50.

Putlitz, Gustav von, 187 performances in all, ranging 5–37, 17 yrs.

Schiller, 497 performances in all, average of 27 yearly, 18 yrs.; 1887, 93.

Scribe, Eugène, average of 8 performances yearly (ranging 1–25), 16 yrs.

Shakspere, 615 performances in all (4–13 plays); average 34 yearly, 18 yrs.; 1874, 55.

Spielhagen, Friedrich, 1871, 6 performances; 1875, 10.

Töpfer, Carl, 1–9 performances yearly, 18 yrs.

Turgenef, "Natalie" given 10 times, 1889.

Voss, Richard, from 1884 average 1–9 performances yearly.

Wichert, Ernst, 121 performances in all: average of 7 yearly, 15 yrs.

Wilbrandt, Adolf, 85 performances in all: average of 1–10 yearly, 15 yrs.

Wildenbruch, Ernst von, 173 performances in all, beginning 1882, ranging 7–57 yearly; 1889, 57.

of the Royal Stage were, to be sure, devoted yearly to Shakspere than to any other dramatist. Schiller ranked next. Goethe showed no mean proportion, but ranked nevertheless below von Moser. Kleist and Grillparzer received little attention and Hebbel was almost tabooed. Foreign plays — chiefly translations from the French — and an overwhelming mass of prosaic or trivial third or fourth rate material, taken in part from the evanescent productions of the day, and in part — when this source failed — from the "harmless" and dramatically sterile period of the 30's and 40's, filled in the repertoire. Even in 1889, when all the world was opening its eyes to the just demand for new life in drama and to the compelling innovations of the modern school, established tradition retained its grip on the Royal Stage.[1] The new plays presented were of the old type. After the première of "Brigitta" Fontane writes:[2]

"Am Sonntag die '*Gespenster*' auf der *Freien Bühne*, am Dienstag 'Brigitta' im Königlichen Schauspielhause. Die 'Gespenster' frisch und lebendig, wie nur je eine lebendige Brigitta; 'Brigitta' so tot, wie nur je Gespenster sein können. Für die Freie Bühne und für die realistische Schule, die nach Herrschaft oder doch mindestens nach Mitregierung ringt, kann nichts Besseres passieren als die Vorführung solcher R. Vossschen Stücke."

When the announcement was promising, the performance usually left much to be desired. The note of regret that most of the actors of the Royal Stage cannot do tragedy and history is frequent. There are repeated references, too, in Fontane's reports to mediocre ideas and to lack of interest

[1] Lack of progressive spirit showed itself also in various ways in connection with even the plays accepted. Otto Brahm writes in a report on Heyse's "Colberg" (*V. Z.* 21. Okt., 1883, No. 493) that the author had expressed regret to him in a private letter that the original version of this play containing the character of Heinrich Marx, "the snake-skin that he discarded long before," is still creeping along in Berlin. Brahm notes that a recent program of the Royal Stage follows finally the change made by Heyse in 1873 (*V. Z.* 28. Sept. 1883, No. 453). Sacrificing the original love-episode, he transformed Heinrich Marx into the brother of Rose Blank.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 298.

on the part of the directors, and the testimony of contemporary critics supports his position.[1]

There are naturally evidences that the task of criticism on the basis of poor repertoire and mediocre presentation was often irksome. After Berndal's masterly impersonation of the Great Elector in Kleist's "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" Fontane writes[2] that the burden of the day and the particular burden of the evening fell away, that the pure atmosphere of genuine art refreshed the tired spirit and fanned up once more old hopes of golden days. In 1878, he writes:

"Diese Theater-Wirtschaft muss doch endlich ein Ende nehmen. Von Sonnabend bis Sonnabend 4mal, und die beiden langen Bilderbesprechungen, das ist zuviel. Da muss man Pietsch sein." [3]

Again in 1883 (from the diary):

"Es war bestimmt, dass ich auch das Referat über das 'Deutsche Theater' übernehmen solle, meine Krankheit machte dies aber unmöglich und so trat College Brahm für mich ein. Ich bin froh, dass ich's los bin; es ging solch Doppelreferat über meine Kräfte. Freitag den 2ten Nov. war ich nach 5 Monaten zum ersten Male wieder im Theater (Struensee) und empfing, ein paar Scenen abgerechnet, den Eindruck einer grossen Unnatur. Unter allerlei Theater-Manieren eine Rolle herkömmlich 'runterzuspielen (genau wie ein Leierkastenstück) heisst nicht Schauspieler sein. Ich bange vor dem, was kommt. Nur Lustspiele sind erträglich."

The question then arises: What made this branch of Fontane's activity tolerable for so long a period? The reports were written to meet the obligation of the day, without any thought on his part — so far as is known — of preservation in permanent form. The collection which he later made of them was made to satisfy his own interest and for reference.[4]

[1] Cf. criticism of "Die Jungfrau von Orleans" by Paul Schlenther, *V. Z.* Feb. 5, 1887; also, Karl Frenzel, "Die Zukunft des Schauspielhauses," *Nationalzeitung*, Dec. 13, 1888.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 327.

[3] *L* — To his wife, Berlin, June 4. — Fontane wrote also many reports on art exhibitions. — Ludwig Pietsch was art critic for *V. Z.* (cf. W, 2, X, 333 f.).

[4] W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, IV.

Throughout the whole time he carried in mind and developed literary plans of larger import.[1] He had passed in 1870, when the work began, the struggle for mere existence in the field of letters. Had this not been so, it is not likely that he would have endured a service that offered only material compensation for its bonds.

The whole argument of his life is against persistence on his part in a situation which did not satisfy to some degree an inner need and afford a certain freedom for self-expression. On this account (1849) his connection with the democratic *Dresdner Zeitung* was brief. A few weeks after accepting the position, he writes to his friend Wolfsohn, who had secured it for him:[2]

"Eben erhalt ich einen sehr freundlichen, anerkennenden Brief von der Dresdner Zeitung, der mir trotz alledem erklärt, dass mein letzter Artikel 'Preussen — ein Militair- oder Polizeistaat?' wegen der durchgehenden altpreussischen Gesinnung nicht habe abgedruckt werden können. Ich wundre mich über diese Erklärung gar nicht, — sie ist ganz in der Ordnung; aber es geht daraus hervor, dass ich für jene Zeitung nicht schreiben kann, wenn gerade das, was mich am meisten erwärmt und erhebt, von ihr verworfen werden muss. Ich bin nun mal Preusse, und freue mich es zu sein."

His disregard for the public career, for which his father had hopes, is further testimony. He writes to his mother from England (1858):[3]

". . . ich zieh' es aber, selbst einschliesslich aller Sorgen und Gefahren, durchaus vor, als Lehrer, Artikelschreiber und Stundengeber mich arm, aber unabhängig durchzuschlagen."

His resignation from the *Kreuzzeitung*[4] was without any provision for another position. Finally, upon resigning the secretaryship at the Royal Academy of Art, he writes to his

[1] Cf. Appendix.

[2] "Briefwechsel," 46; also, 37, 40 f.

[3] W, 2, VI, 99; cf. also 96 f.

[4] This was another name for the *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, successor to the *Preussische Zeitung*. Fontane had been connected with the ministerial press from the beginning of his literary profession, with the *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, of which Dr. Beutner was chief editor, for ten years

wife, whose opposition to the renunciation of the new position was not mild:[1]

"Ich ersehne den Moment, wo ich aus diesem wichtigtuerischen Nichts, das mit Feierlichkeit bekleidet wird, wieder heraus sein werde. Dinge, Personen, Zustände sind alle gleich unerquicklich. Ich passe in solche Verhältnisse nicht hinein und will mich lieber weiter quälen."

The only conclusion to draw is that there were for Fontane certain sources of satisfaction in the work of dramatic criticism that counterbalanced the unfavorable conditions and made his sacrifice for it worth while. Among these, a belief in the theater as a power probably played some part, although no excessive importance is to be attached to this factor. It was not the purpose of the drama, in his opinion, to exploit truths or to teach facts, although he demanded that due regard be paid to these, when they provided a natural and necessary background for the human beings whose inner life was there to be set in relief. For him the stage stood first among good and elevating diversions.[2] That it should have power in this capacity is at times very definitely stated in his criticism. From England he asks the question, why such a play as "Antony and Cleopatra" is not given at home? He spurns the excuse that the great mass cannot appreciate it and declares it to be the problem of the stage to awaken such appreciation. The enthusiasm with which he writes of the feeling of the folk in England for Shakspere, who in Germany is considered "caviar for the people," shows clearly his ideal for the stage.[3]

(W, 2, VI, 118, 191–199). His resignation took place in 1869. A somewhat tardy addition to the diary (under 1870) refers to it as follows:

"Am Oster-Sonnabend (16 April) hatte ich eine Scene mit Dr. Beutner, ennuyirte mich aufs äusserste und beschloss meine Stellung aufzugeben und in Freiheit ein neues Leben zu beginnen. Am Mittwoch nach Ostern (20.) schrieb ich ihm einen Kündigungsbrief und habe seit jener Zeit die Schwelle der Redaktion nicht mehr überschritten. Es war ein Wagniss, aber in diesem Augenblick, 4 Monate nach dem Abbruch, preise ich meinen Entschluss. Es scheint, dass es das Richtige war."

[1] W, 2, VI, 241; cf. also, 239–242 f; X, 368 ff., 377 ff.

[2] W, 2, XI, 287 (letter to August v. Heyden).

[3] W, 2, VIII, 478 f.

It is not impossible that he felt some pride in being critic for what was — in position at least — the first stage in Germany. At any rate, he labored zealously to arouse in the Royal Theater of Berlin the desire to take the place incumbent upon it of leader in German dramaturgic art. There are not infrequent withering suggestions to the effect that the Royal Stage is unworthy of its calling. A few salient examples will suffice here: (1872) he relegates "Auf dem Oberhof" (Birch-Pfeiffer) to the suburban stage with the words that it is ridiculous elsewhere;[1] (1873) he writes that the Royal Stage cannot be satisfied with the requisites for an amateur performance;[2] (1878) he refers to the superiority of the Meiningen performances not only in setting and costume, but in histrionic ability and general poetic charm, with the opinion that if the situation cannot be remedied, it is none the less to be regretted that a troop of players from a little German *Residenz* should have to serve as models every year for the Royal Stage.[3]

The gratification that comes from the consciousness of being an active molding force certainly did not enter into the considerations that led Fontane to retain this work. There are various indications of the belief that criticism was in this sense a thankless task, that conditions were practically inflexible. The persistence with which he maintained his standards brings with it ever-increasing admiration for his courage in facing lack of response. It is impossible to disconnect his detailed and careful suggestions for improvement from all hope of realizing visible result. In other lines of work he was by no means insensitive to worthy appreciation and praise. Furthermore, a letter at the end of his long and steady race, containing suggestions concerning his successor, shows a far different dream of what criticism might do.[4]

This somewhat impersonal attitude toward recognition, which prevailed in spite of temporary irritations[5] and dis-

[1] W, 2, VIII, 116 f.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 119.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 60 f.
[4] Cf. W, 2, XI, 219 f.
[5] Cf. W, 2, VI, 280. — He writes to his wife here: "Die Sachen von der Marlitt, von Max Ring, von Brachvogel, Personen, die ich gar nicht

courageements, the ability to maintain confidence in the word he spoke, side by side with the consciousness that it was at best but a small wedge to open the way to improvement, may be attributed to the presence, in balanced form, of apparent contradictions in his nature. The necessity for self-expression was behind his work. He evidently enjoyed objectively, too, the sense of adding his word to the current of daily opinion.[1] But a deep, optimistic belief in the beneficence of existing order, in *life* as a determining force, working by gradual processes for good, resigned him to the fact that he was but a small part of a great whole, and gave him, without any low valuation of his contribution to the whole, a kind of superiority to its immediate influence. He wrote to Georg Friedländer (1889):[2]

"Beifall, Zustimmung, Ehren bedeuten uns immer noch was, als wäre damit etwas getan. Das ist aber falsch und unklug. Wir müssen vielmehr unsere Seele mit dem Glauben an die Nichtigkeit dieser Dinge ganz erfüllen und unser Glück einzig und allein in der Arbeit, in dem uns Betätigen unser selbst finden."

But Fontane did not have to lean continuously in his work as critic either upon his life-philosophy or upon his conviction as to the function of the stage. Natural as it was that there should have been periods of depression and that when at seventy he relinquished regular work of this kind, the sense of compulsion in it should have come to be burdensome,[3] yet various degrees of pleasure came to him quite spontaneously in connection with his visits to the theater.

There are indications, direct and indirect, that his fondness for novelty tended to make even the waste places in his long service as theater-reporter more productive of interest for

als Schriftsteller gelten lasse, erleben nicht nur zahlreiche Auflagen, sondern werden auch womöglich ins Vorder- und Hinter-Indische übersetzt; um mich kümmert sich keine Katze."

[1] Cf. W, 2, XI, 301 (letter to Friedrich Stephany, June 6, 1893, in regard to a criticism which he was contributing voluntarily).

[2] W, 2, XI, 227.

[3] Cf. W, 2, XI, 232 (letter to P. Schlenther).

him than they would have been for many. He wrote to his wife from London:[1]

"Ich kann dir hier keine Genüsse versprechen, aber wir sind nun mal auf ein apartes Leben angewiesen und vor allem darauf, rastlos zu probieren, wo Frau Fortuna denn eigentlich steckt."

To Ludwig Pietsch (1874):[2]

"Alles Aparte, Courageuse, die Tradition lachend bei Seite Schiebende reizt mich."

He was interested in new interpretations of standard roles, if there was anything in the text to justify the innovation, whether he could give it the approval of first choice or not. Müller's Falstaff,[3] which on the whole lacked originality, offered this interesting new point: where Falstaff impersonates the king,[4] Müller assumed the attitude and manner of speech of a king from a puppet-play, taking his suggestion apparently from the words of Mistress Quickly. Fontane's personal opinion is clear from the statement that what isn't tabooed (verboten) is permissible; but he says that the effect was very good. In regard to Kraussneck's Tell, the simple, natural *man* instead of the usual natural *hero*, he writes:[5]

"Es wohnt dieser Auffassung ein grosser Reiz inne, und ganze Scenen wurden dadurch ungewöhnlich ansprechend. . . ."

This interest in new interpretations, whether they coincided with his preference or not, is but a phase of Fontane's objectivity. He writes to Friedländer (1893) of his sense for facts as they were:[6]

"Ich habe das Leben immer genommen, wie ich's fand, und mich ihm unterworfen. Das heisst nach aussen hin, in meinem Gemüte nicht."

[1] *L* — (cf. above p. 5, n. 2, from first letter).
[2] W, 2, X, 334.
[3] Cf. *V. Z.* May 8, 1877.
[4] "Henry IV," Part I, Act II, Sc. 4. The lines in question — from the Schlegel translation (cf. "Shakespeares dramatische Werke," übersetzt von August Wilhelm Schlegel — 6ter Teil, Berlin, 1800, S. 83) are: "O prächtig! Er macht es den Lumpen-Komödianten so natürlich nach, wie man was sehen kann."
[5] *V. Z.* Dec. 14, 1880, B 3.
[6] W, 2, XI, 309.

These words are indicative of his attitude toward the stage; he accepted what it offered at its face-value. When the offering lacked the excellence which affords artistic pleasure, he was interested in it as a product of conditions. The performance of "Richard III" on the Soho stage in London took incredible liberties with the text.[1] It constructed an entire new opening scene, in which Henry VI appeared as prisoner and the Duke of Oxford reported the murder of the Prince of Wales by the Yorks; it added the murder of Henry VI (from Part III, "Henry VI"); it adapted to its own purposes the Macbeth monolog, "Is this a sword —"; it left in Act IV no stone upon another of the original. Yet for Fontane this mutilated "Richard III" was food for reflection as an interesting proof that Shakspere may be made to appeal to even the lower classes.

Fontane's more than usual interest in human beings, also contributed without doubt to his enjoyment of this work. His fondness for intercourse with people amounted to a real need. Pressed as he was by the necessity of making his work lucrative, he never for this reason isolated himself for any great length of time. One of the frequent notes in his diary in the early years of pressure, incomplete as this seems to be — at times in fact the only subjective note — is "geplaudert."[2] The character and the vast number of his letters evince

[1] W, 2, VIII, 469–475. — He writes of it to his wife (*L* — London, Sept. 16, 1855): "Mein Kunsteifer wurde belohnt; ich genas während des Spiels. Daraus hast Du aber nicht zu schliessen, das es sehr schön war; es war nur sehr interessant, Parallelen ziehen zu können und in mehr als einer Beziehung lehrreich. Die kleine Bühne, die das Stück gab, heisst das 'Soho-Theater'; nach dieser Aufführung zu schliessen müsste es richtiger 'O ho-Theater' heissen."

[2] The following citations (*D*, 1860) are characteristic:

"d. 20. 2. — Gearbeitet (Evangeline) — Ellora bei uns. Lübke liest ein Kapitel aus seiner Kunstgeschichte (Masaccio und Ghirlandajo). — Geplaudert.

"d. 25. 2. Gearbeitet (Longfellow.) In den Rütli bei Prof. Menzel. Gespräche über bairische und sächsische Kriegsgeschichte — die letztere wird von Blomberg und Menzel sehr verteidigt. Nachher Plaudereien über Kopisch, Ferrand und Minding. — Die Kreuz Ztg. bringt meinen Artikel über Ruppin. Geplaudert.

pleasure in chats on paper and loyalty to absent friends. His family letters show interest in every detail connected with the domestic and social life of his wife and children. Both diary and letters mention constantly people of interest whom he meets in social gatherings or in the course of the summer half-holiday. His "Kinderjahre" and "Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig" are very largely recollections of people. He was a faithful member of three literary clubs,[1] and the minor note in his letters from England is due in large part to the sense of separation from his friends, and from the inspiration which he found in them.

"d. 26. 2. Sonntag. — Gearbeitet (Longfellow). — In den Tunnel; Ernst Schultze liest ein Elfen-Gedicht. Festsetzung einer Concurrenz zum letzten Sonntag im April — (ein erzählendes Gedicht). Nach Haus. Geplaudert. Gelesen (Oxford).

[1] These have been mentioned (p. 23, n. 2). — The membership of "Der Tunnel über der Spree," the most celebrated literary club of the period, included the most prominent personages of Berlin, engaged in the pursuit of any branch of art. (Cf. W. 2, III, 5–10; Wilhelm Lübke, "Lebenserinnerungen," Berlin, 1891, 185 f.) Fontane entered the Tunnel in 1844 (W, 2, III, 6); a letter of Nov. 1861 shows him still an active member (W, 2, X, 227), and according to a brief record of statistics ("Zur Geschichte des literarischen Sonntags-Vereins"; cf. above, Introd., p. xiv, n. 1), he was a member as late as 1865, and one of the most active contributors to its programs: 1844, 9 so-called *Späne* (cf. W, 2, III, 13); 1845, 15; 1846, 23; 1847, 15; 1849, 15; 1850, 7; 1851, 4; 1852, 8; 1853, 7; 1854, 4; 1855, 4; 1859, 11; 1861, 2; 1862, 3; 1864, 1; 1865, 1. Three prizes are recorded: for "Der Tag von Hemmingstedt" in 1851 (cf. W, 2, X, 34); for "Lord Athol," 1855; for "Gorm Grymme," 1864. Fontane himself laid value upon the influence of the Tunnel in his development (cf. W, 2, X, 107; XI, 309). His words: "Das Beste was ich weiss, hab ich durch Umgang, Erzählung, Lektüre gelernt" (*L* — to his wife, London, March 18, 1857), cannot but have reference in part to this.

The Rütli was founded by Franz Kugler in 1852 (W, 2, X, 75) It was made up of especially kindred spirits from the Tunnel, and held weekly gatherings also (Wilhelm Lübke, *op. cit.*, 186). Fontane was one of the original members and was devoted to it as late as 1892, when he had become one of only three attendants (W, 2, XI, 286).

The Ellora was composed also chiefly of members of the Tunnel. It was limited to seven. It began (1852) with weekly meetings (Lübke, 187), and Fontane mentions attending it in Sept. 1871 (W, 2, X, 290).

"Was ich hier auf die Dauer nicht ertragen kann, das ist das Alleinstehn, die geistige Vereinsamung. . . . Es fehlt mir aller Zuspruch, alle Aufmunterung, alles Mitbestreben, alles, was wohltut, erfreut, erhebt, begeistert." [1]

A quarter of a century later he writes in a vacation letter from Krummhübel: [2]

"Ich habe hier mehr Personen gesprochen, mehr Konversation gemacht, mehr Fragen berührt, mehr Lob und Freundlichkeit eingeerntet, als in Berlin in einem ganzen Jahre. Wie lebe ich denn in der Reichshauptstadt? Arbeit bis um 3, Mittagbrot, Schlaf, Kaffee, Buch oder Zeitung, Abendspaziergang und Tee. Von 365 Tagen verlaufen 300 nach dieser Vorschrift. Du denkst 'ich wünsche es so.' Das ist aber nicht der Fall; ich dürste nach Umgang, Verkehr, Menschen, aber freilich alles muss danach sein und speziell *die* Formen haben, die mir gefallen, sonst danke ich für Obst und ziehe die Einsamkeit vor."

The types which the stage presents are likely to be in themselves more vivid than the average type of daily intercourse. Moreover, they brought him into contact with the creative impulse of author and impersonator engaged in the solution of problems of art, in the striving for an ideal. For these reasons, the reflected life of the stage was often more interesting to him than the reality offered by social intercourse. He wrote (1892) to von Heyden concerning the theater: [3]

"Die Sache hat einen Reiz und auch die Personen. Ein Geheimrat muss schon *sehr* gut sein wenn er so interessant sein soll wie Frau Kahle oder die kleine Conrad." [4]

Moreover, there were occasional hightides in the repertoire, and Fontane's response at such times indicates that his critical work had for him, temporarily, an interest second to none. The rare phenomenon of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" calls him from Ruppin, where he had evidently gone to collect material for the "Wanderungen." He writes with appreciation that the season has begun brilliantly, that it is

[1] W, 2, VI, 95 f.
[2] *L* — To his wife, Aug. 9, 1884.
[3] W, 2, XI, 287.
[4] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 337 ff., 382 ff.

rumored that "Oedipus Coloneus" and "Antigone" and a cycle of Shakspere histories are to follow.[1]

In 1877 this cycle claimed his attention along with the work on "Vor dem Sturm."[2] A twofold predilection was involved here, — Shakspere and history. Fontane was never a blind hero-worshiper. His assertion[3] that we take too biased a position toward our classic writers, when we attempt to idolize even what is imperfect, may be applied to his attitude toward Shakspere. He speaks of wide, waste places in "Antony and Cleopatra";[4] considers some of the love-speeches of Juliet too subtly pointed;[5] objects to the treason in Part II of "Henry IV";[6] and finds some of the humor in "Twelfth Night" unintelligible because it is distinctly the product of its own time.[7] Yet Shakspere is for him the ideal combination of human truth, delicacy and depth of conception, variety and realism in the portrayal of character, simplicity and poetic power in language, inexhaustible and refreshing humor.[8]

His fondness for history antedated even his enthusiasm for Shakspere; if not an inheritance from his father, it was at least so successfully nurtured in impressionable years through

[1] *V. Z.* Sept. 23, 1873, B 2. (Parts from this report are given, W, 2, VIII, 1 f.) The diary note here is (1873): "Ende Sept. nach Ruppin-dem Einzug der 24er beigewohnt, die aus Frankreich (Verdun) zurück; kehren. Vorher Besuch in Wusterhausen, Trieplatz und Tramnitz gemacht, um mein Rohr-Kapitel schreiben zu können. Nach Berlin zurück, um der 1. Aufführung des 'Königs Oedipus' beizuwohnen, dann abermals auf 8 Tage nach Ruppin."

[2] Here the diary reads: "Anfang Okt. reiste ich nach Frankfurt a. O., um für den 4. Band meines Romans die nötigen Lokalstudien zu machen. Dann begann ich diesen Schlussband. — Im Theater war ziemlich viel zu thun; die Shakespeare'schen Königsdramen wurden in einem Cyclus gegeben."

[3] W, 2, XI, 16 f. (letter to Wilhelm Hertz).

[4] *V. Z.* May 27, 1871, B 2.

[5] *V. Z.* Jan. 11, 1874, B 4 (report on "Was ihr wollt").

[6] W, 2, VIII, 13.

[7] *V. Z.* Jan. 26, 1884, B 1 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 21 ff.).

[8] He tried his hand at translating "Midsummer Night's Dream" (W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, XII) and also "Hamlet" (cf. above, p. xiii.)

unique instruction by question and anecdotes,[1] that in this branch, if in no other, Fontane's generally desultory education attained brilliant results. He writes to Storm in regard to this (1854):[2]

"Als ich ein dreizehnjähriger Tertianer und im übrigen ein mittelmässiger Schüler war, hatt' ich in der Geschichte solches Renommee, dass die Primaner mit mir spazieren gingen und sich — ich kann's nicht anders ausdrücken — für's Examen durch mich einpaucken liessen. Zum Teil war es blosser Zahlen- und Gedächtniskram, doch entsinne ich mich andrerseits deutlich eines Triumphes, den ich feierte, als ich meinen Zuhörern die Schlachten von Crécy und Poitiers ausmalte."

His intimate knowledge of facts, and the hold which the great characters of the past had from childhood taken upon his imagination, made him attach more than ordinary importance to the presentation of historic characters upon the stage, take unusual pleasure in a Shaksperean history as faulty in form and as lacking in unified dramatic content as "Henry VI,"[3] and study with extreme interest the adaptability of the Chronicles to the stage.

The year 1878 brought as another oasis in the general dearth the conjunction of the first performances of Calderon's "Life a Dream" and Grillparzer's "Traum ein Leben." Grillparzer did not see the footlights of the Royal Stage frequently, and of the plays given "Medea" was presented most often. It was the first appearance of a drama by Calderon in Fontane's experience as reporter.[4] December 13, the day after the Grillparzer première, he wrote to Wilhelm Hertz that he had sat at his desk "en suite" till after seven in the evening over a comparative criticism of the two plays, and there is here a naively frank expression of pleasure in trying his powers.[5]

"Ueber zwei solche Stücke zu schreiben, sie zu parallelisieren und jedes in seiner Art zu würdigen, ist wirklich schwer, und wenn ich

[1] W, 2, II, 149 ff.
[2] W, 2, X,106.
[3] Cf. below, pp. 76 f.
[4] Cf. above, p. 14, n. 1.
[5] W, 2, X, 398.

damit fertig bin, wundre ich mich immer, dass ich's überhaupt konnte. Naives Geständnis!"

The Wildenbruch premières (1882) furnish an instance of violent disapproval.[1] The diary, more than a bare record of fact at this point, shows flashes of personal conviction, and even the briefer entries, in which such traces are lacking, indicate that this new apparition in drama had vital interest for Fontane. This appears from the following extracts:

(18. Jan.) . . . "Um 9 zu Heydens; grosse Gesellschaft. Gespräch mit Herrn v. Wildenbruch über seinen 'Harold', demnächst ein interessantes politisches Gespräch mit General Fabre du Faure über Bismarck. Spät nach Haus."

(21. April.) . . . "Um $6\frac{1}{4}$ ins Theater; E. v. Wildenbruch's 'Harold' kommt zur Aufführung und erringt einen grossen Erfolg. Es ist sehr wirksam und talentvoll, aber au fond schwach, sogar sehr schwach; Hugo Bürger in der Tragödie, also Scenengeschicklichkeit und Raffinement, eine Mischung aus der *nie* was werden kann. Diese Leute haben nur ein Organ für die Wirkung, nicht für die Wahrheit, und daran scheitern sie."

(22. April.) "Von 9 Uhr früh bis 9 Uhr Abends en suite an der Kritik über 'Harold' geschrieben. . . ."

(23. April.) . . . "Besuch von Dr. O. Brahm; Gespräch über 'Harold' und Julius Wolffs 'Tannhäuser'. Auslassungen über bornierte Berühmtheiten."

(25. April.) . . . "Frenzels Kritik über 'Harold' gelesen. . . . "

(27. April.) "Berliner Fremdenblatt und Tageblatt gekauft wegen der Kritiken (Harold)."

(9. Dez.) . . . "Rütli bei mir, statt bei Menzel. Zugegen: Lazarus, Zöllner, K. Eggers, zuletzt auch Heyden. Ich musste gegen 7 ins Schauspielhaus, wo Wildenbruchs 'Opfer um Opfer' gegeben wurde. In Wahrheit, Willkür, Unsinn, die Steigerung von 'Harold'. Armer Stümper, der sich einbildet in Heinr. v. Kleists Sattel weiter reiten zu können. Den Sattel hat er vielleicht, aber nicht das Pferd."

(10. Dez.) . . . "Kritik geschrieben über 'Opfer um Opfer'. . . ."

(11. Dez.) "Kritik über 'Opfer um Opfer' corrigiert und zur Post gegeben."

(12. Dez.) "Gearbeitet: Dreilinden. Um 3 Uhr zu Zöllner zur Gratulation. Brief von Heyden in der Wildenbruch Frage, sehr

[1] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 254 ff.

liebenswürdig. Novellenstoff aufgeschrieben ('Irrt, wirrt'). Emilie liest mir 2 vorzügliche Rezensionen über Wildenbruchs 'Opfer um Opfer' vor, eine von Frenzel in der Nat. Ztg., die andre von Oscar Blumenthal im Tageblatt. Gelesen." [1]

But Fontane was interested in dramaturgy even when the repertoire offered no particular phase of value. He wrote to Schlenther on resigning from his post as stage-critic [2] that he had not been a reluctant theater-goer and that he was always entertained, even when what the program offered was horrible (scheusslich). Of all forms of literary expression, the drama seems to have had — next to the lyric — the strongest appeal for him, and he had cherished the plan of trying his own hand at dramatic production. He wrote to Wolfsohn (Nov. 1847) that the best things he had done so far — ballads and sketches of historic characters — made a natural transition to epic and drama.[3] He speaks with satisfaction of the fact that his "epic poem in nine brief songs" ("Von der schönen Rosamunde") has not been without its appeal to Berlin hearts and says that he would begin work at once with righteous zeal on a drama that has vital hold upon him, if he did not have to deal out prescriptions to the public instead of five-foot iambics. In 1848 a letter from von Lepel to Fontane mentions the latter's plan for a tragedy "Cromwell," [4] and the first act of a tragedy "Karl Stuart" was read in the Tunnel in 1849.[5]

[1] Frenzel's criticism (*Nationalzeitung*, No. 581, Dec. 12, 1882, Morgenausgabe) emphasizes the lack of originality shown in this play, compares it with Gutzkow's "Ein weisses Blatt" and Spielhagen's "Liebe für Liebe," deplores the fact that Wildenbruch has left the realm of historic drama, and charges him with imitation of the French. Blumenthal's criticism (*Berliner Tageblatt*, No. 581, Dec. 12, 1882, Morgenausgabe, — 1. Beiblatt) is entirely in the tone of sarcastic mockery, of which Fontane did not usually approve in criticism. (Cf. below p. 46.)

[2] W, 2, XI, 232.

[3] "Briefwechsel" (Wolfsohn), 30.

[4] Bernhard von Lepel, "Vierzig Jahre Briefe" (Berlin, 1910), 107.

[5] Carl Wegmann, "Theodor Fontane als Übersetzer englischer und schottischer Balladen" (Münster in Westfalen, 1910), 110; Wegmann, who had access to the Tunnel records, reports that it consisted of two scenes — the first in the royal castle, the second in a tavern — that

Both "Cromwell" and "Karl Stuart" remained fragments. Of the first, what developed for publication was "Cromwells letzte Nacht," a dramatic monolog in which Cromwell justifies himself and prefers death to the return of the ghost of Charles, as it had appeared to him in a dream.[1] In 1850, von Lepel referred [2] in a letter to Fontane's plan of publishing part of an act of "Karl Stuart," and the first edition of the poems contains a dramatic fragment of this title.[3] It has the heading "Erster Akt" and corresponds in setting to the suggestion from the Tunnel report of the first scene of the original read in the Tunnel. It is a scene in the apartment of the king, in which the wishes of the Minister, Earl Strafford, and the queen, Henriette Marie of France, come into conflict concerning the banishment of Marie de Medici, and Strafford, in spite of his triumph with the king, foresees his fall. The later editions of Fontane's poems include only the "Puritaner Predigt," [4] reported by Strafford to the king.

Fontane's interest in the drama as a form may have been whetted in the beginning also by the fact that a number of his friends were trying their skill in it. He writes of Heyse's "Francesca von Rimini" in 1850, and again, somewhat adversely, in 1851.[5] He notes (1851) that Kugler had read a five-act tragedy, "Kaiser Pertinax," in the Tunnel.[5] In 1854–1855 both Wolfsohn and von Lepel consulted him concerning

the history of the land, the feeling of the people, the intrigue of individuals, the agitation of the masses are excellently exposed in dialog that is brief, rapid, and fruitful of tension.

[1] Cf. W, 2, I, 174 f. The form in which the poem appears here is with but few changes the same as in the first edition ("Gedichte von Theodor Fontane," Berlin, 1851, 110 ff.).

[2] Bernhard v. Lepel, *op. cit.*, 159 f.

[3] Cf. "Gedichte" (1851), 251–284.

[4] W, 2, I, 171 ff. — This is slightly revised at the beginning and at the end, to give it direct instead of indirect form.

[5] W, 2, X, 13, 18, 24. — According to Fontane's statement Kugler's play aroused no great enthusiasm, yet for some reason this is one of the few books that he asked his wife (1856) to bring with her to London. The list, made up of classics, hand-books, and the works of friends, is as follows:

L — "(London, d. 15. Januar '56).

"Schiller, . . . (Keine Prosa).

dramas in the process of growth.[1] That Fontane's judgment concerning drama was of value even at this early date is shown (1854) in a letter to the effect that Eduard Devrient had expressed the same adverse opinion in regard to Wolfsohn's "Herr von Tausend Seelen" as Fontane[2] and in the fact that this play, revised according to their criticism, had at least a brief stage success (1856).[3]

There are other indications that Fontane could more than hold his own with his literary friends; his "Tag von Hemmingstedt" was awarded the Tunnel prize against contesting poems of both Heyse and von Lepel,[4] and only Heyse had made such a strong appeal to the public as he. Moreover, although the fondness for detail which he shows in his travels and narratives, and his tendency in the latter to avoid the treatment of conflict, argue against dramatic

"Goethe, den 'Faust' und ein altes schlechtes Buch—Lepeln gehörig — worin Goethe's Gedichte enthalten sind. Treibt sich irgendwo 'rum.

"Heine, Gedichte I und II und Romanzen.

"Mörike, Storm, Scherenberg.

"Lessing (nur die berühmten 3 Stücke).

"Lenau (die kleine Ausgabe).

"Paul Heyse, die Brüder.

"Merckel, der Urlaub.

"Lepel, Gesammelte Werke.

"Kugler, Pertinax. Und der Band wo 'Genesius' drin steht.

"Fontane, Gesammelte Werke, namentlich aber das verkannte Album. Auch eine Argo.

"Shakespeare nicht. Ich habe ihn hier. Wenn Platz ist, die Uebersetzung.

"Platen, 1. und 2. Band.

"Französisches Lexikon.

"Heyses Fremdwörterbuch. Dies bezahlt die Kasse der Deutsch-Engl.-Correspondenz.

"Wegen anderer Sachen sei so gut anzufragen. Die gewünschten Werke der Rütlionen und ihre Basreliefs werden sie mir hoffentlich schenken. Heine und Mörike treibst Du vielleicht billig auf."

[1] "Briefwechsel" (Wolfsohn), 109; Bernhard v. Lepel, *op. cit.*, 256 f.

[2] Cf. "Briefwechsel" (Wolfsohn), 109. — Fontane's opinion, if expressed in writing, is not among the published letters.

[3] Bernhard v. Lepel, *op. cit.*, 289. The play was entitled in revised form "Nur eine Seele." Cf. also "Briefwechsel" (Wolfsohn), 110, note.

[4] W, 2, X, 34.

ability, he was not without certain important requisites for this literary form. The power of realistic dialog would have been as valuable to him in drama as in narrative. The use of brevity and thrilling suggestion, which he shows in the English ballads, evinces power to produce tension.[1]

Perhaps the fact that Fontane was not impressed by the work of his friends was one influence that made him abstain from drama. He considered Kugler an accomplished man, but not an original poet. He found von Lepel lacking in critical ability, and his "Herodes" weak in structure in spite of the brilliant details that in his opinion characterized all of von Lepel's work.[2] He regarded the drama, too, as a difficult form and seems to have doubted his ability to excel in it. He wrote to Friedrich Witte (1851) that he could do nothing with drama until he had repose and freedom from the cares incident to making a livelihood. He wrote (1856) to Henriette von Merckel,[3] who had praised "Der letzte York" and expressed the wish that he would write a drama, that he had microscopic germs of a dozen dramas in mind, but that even if he were in the near future to receive a sinecure with 1200 Thaler attached, he should probably not attempt drama. A time that demanded special permission for the expression of a liberal thought in the third scene of the third act would, he said, be unpropitious for even a Shakspere, and although it was the right of genius to overcome all difficulties, he was no genius.[4]

[1] Cf. Carl Wegmann, *op. cit.*, 21 ff., 33 ff., 40, 59 ff. Wegmann points out that Fontane's version of "John Musgrave and Lady Barnard" is better motivated and more tragic than that of Percy, that Fontane's omissions add dramatic directness to "Das Douglas Trauerspiel," that he gives dramatic structure to the action in "Lord Athol," that he substitutes dramatic for epic touches in "Marie Duchatel," in "Schön Margret und Lord William," and in "Chevy Chase." — Most of these ballads were read in the Tunnel between Dec. 1848 and April, 1855.

[2] W, 2, X, 35, 185.

[3] W, 2, X, 158.

[4] Fontane refers here to the forbidden introduction of a Margrave upon the stage, and Dr. Schlenther is of the opinion that he may have had in mind a cycle of Hohenzollern dramas (cf. Paul Schlenther, "Aus Theodor Fontanes Frühzeit," *Berliner Tageblatt*, Beiblatt 4, Nov. 16, 1910).

Although the hope of producing a drama was never realized, Fontane's interest in the process of production remained.[1] The duty of reviewing a large proportion of the premières of his period would have been intolerable to many men, but it was not so to him.[2] Details interested him, and his attitude was usually that of study and of investigation as to method. He wrote on resigning from the Royal Academy of Arts:[3]

"Eine gute Theaterkritik, um das Kleinste herauszugreifen, ist viel, viel besser als diese Reskripte-Fabrikation, bei der ich noch nichts Erfreuliches habe herauskommen sehn."

The première of Koberstein's "Um Nancy" (1773) was instructive to him, not on account of the worth of the play, but for the evidence it afforded that a play may be good in structure, at least acceptable in general conception and character, and yet fail absolutely through lack of poetic (dichterische) technic.[4] He wrote (1878) in his diary of the work of reporting upon French players:

"Mit dem 1. Jan. fand sich auch wieder die französische Schauspieler-Truppe ein und dieselbe Mühsal begann wie im vorigen Jahre.

[1] He spoke with some feeling late in life to Dr. Schlenther of his "Karl Stuart" and of the preservation of the fragment (cf. Paul Schlenther, *op. cit.*).

[2] Reports on plays by contemporary authors and on others produced for the first time on the Royal Stage constituted one special function of the theater critic (according to information from the editorial office, *V. Z.*). There was no stipulation as to the number of criticisms per week; the number four of which Fontane speaks (cf. above, p. 17, n. 3) must have been self-imposed, therefore, from interest and sense of duty. In spite of the temporary renunciation of his position (1876), of almost annual interruptions from illness, and of the fact that the last three years (1887–1889) show criticisms of only 11 premières out of 27, Fontane's record from 1871 to 1889 shows reports on 180 of the 219 new plays presented (this statement is based on a comparison of my own record of Fontane's reports for the *V. Z.* with the printed statistics of the Royal Theater; cf. above, p. 14, n. 1).

[3] W, 2, VI, 241.

[4] *V. Z.* Feb. 1, 1873, B 2. (A part of this report is found W, 2, VIII. 226 f.)

Diesmal aber erhielt ich 2 Billets und war in der angenehmen Lage meine Frau, die das französ. Theater liebt, mitnehmen zu können. Ich fing auch an, dabei zu lernen, nicht sprachlich aber literarisch."

His discussion of "Antony and Cleopatra" shows a similar point of view. After treating the chief weakness, the death of Antony at the end of Act IV and the attempt to change the sequence of scenes, he writes:[1]

"Ein solcher Abend gewährt einem mehr ein wissenschaftliches Interesse, als einen *künstlerischen Genuss*. Man lernt, man fördert sich, man empfängt einen Gradmesser mehr, man gewinnt Einblicke in grosse Vorzüge, denen nachzustreben ist, in kleine Fehler, die zu vermeiden sind."

When he relinquished the post of critic (1889), he had ceased to feel any pleasure in reviewing mediocre plays, but he wrote to Friedrich Bruckmann[2] that he enjoyed writing columns on the performances of the Free Stage. Between 1887 and 1889 he saw the fulfilment of his hopes for modern drama realized to some extent in Wildenbruch's "Die Quitzows," in Björnson's "A Gauntlet," more especially in the technical art of Ibsen;[3] and he passed through no period of groping and wavering, as did some of his contemporaries,[4] before he could appreciate the new technic. A last evidence that Fontane's criticism of drama was not perfunctory lies in the series of enthusiastic discussions of the work of Tolstoi, Holz and Schlaf, and Gerhart Hauptmann,[5] which he contributed voluntarily to the *Vossische Zeitung* or held at length in letters to friends after his regular work as critic was finished. His response in the midst of opposing colleagues was again as spontaneous and direct as that to Ibsen, and more

[1] *V. Z.* May 27, 1871, B 2.

[2] W, 2, XI, 231.

[3] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 265 ff., 219 ff., 189 ff.

[4] He writes (*D*, 1889): "Nur ein einziges Stück tritt im Laufe der Saison mit den 'Quitzows' in Concurrenz, Ibsens 'Die Frau vom Meere.' Nur die Ibsenianer und ich treten dafür ein, alle andren verhöhnen und verurteilen es."

[5] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 207 ff., 300–316. — W, 2, XI, 312 f., 381 ff., 411 ff.

enthusiastic, because he saw in the new drama a truer reproduction of life.

Dr. Schlenther writes of Fontane that he had stood almost alone in the center of literary production for half a century, a voice in the desert, attempting by honest effort to direct the artistic taste of his time into proper channels.[1] His belief in art as a living thing, a necessary expression of the great truths of human life, to which every generation and every contributor may give something new, made it possible for him to enjoy testing every effort toward new attainment, every attempt to revive what was of value in established forms. There is, however, a tendency to dismiss Fontane's critical work with mere mention, or with half charitable statements of neutral shade, except for the respect shown for his individuality and his human wisdom. The fact that he could recognize good in a poor play may have been interpreted to mean that his standard was variable or his ideal easily satisfied. There is no more conclusive proof to the contrary than in his attitude toward the naturalistic drama. His firm conviction throughout his work had been that the drama should mirror actual life. Nevertheless, although he looked upon this attainment of the naturalists as a triumph, their goal meant for him only a temporary resting place. Art, in his opinion, demanded a broader conception of life. Therefore, he regarded the work of even the naturalists as only a most important contribution toward a completer drama of the future.

[1] W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, XX.

CHAPTER II

Fontane's Conception of Criticism

"Was nicht in der Wahrheit steht, das stirbt."
Th. Fontane (W, 2, VIII, 254.)

In certain fundamental lines the trend of what may be expected in Fontane's critical work is determined at the outset by opinions which he expressed in regard to criticism in general and by testimony concerning himself as critic.

To him the learned application of established theory to the question in hand meant little or nothing. Not tenets but sensations are to sit in judgment. In 1877 he writes that impressions may err, but that even in error they avail more than dead law.[1] Again in 1886, in praise of Schlenther's criticism, he declares that a fresh, normal, strong feeling alone makes the critic, that everything else — especially measuring by a certain yard-stick, be it Tieck, Lessing, or even Aristotle — is nonsense and shows only dependence.[2]

Fontane's lack of academic experience and theoretical training naturally leads us to the questions whether he was not forced to this initial point of view, whether he could upon any other basis take a place beside professional critics.

A certain sensitiveness to the weakness of his professional armor manifests itself, to be sure, in different ways. A sense of triumph when the unacademic succeeds cannot but reveal an undercurrent suggestive of the untrained man and his personal struggle in the literary world. This is certainly not the dominant impulse in his cordial congratulation of Otto Brahm on receipt of the first prize from the *Allgemeiner*

[1] W, 2, VIII, 221.
[2] W, 2, XI, 108.

Verein für deutsche Literatur for his Kleist biography, but it is present, no doubt, as a minor ingredient. He writes:[1]

"Als Kollege habe ich — und mit mir gewiss viele — noch die Spezialfreude gehabt, dass ein Schriftsteller den ersten und ein Professor erst den zweiten Preis errungen hat. Es ist recht gut, dass wir Professoren und Geheimräte haben, aber ihre Alleinherrschaft dann und wann gebrochen zu sehn, ist doch eine Wonne, weil ein gelegentlicher Triumph von Gerechtigkeit und bon sens."

There are evidences, too, especially in the testimony of the later years, of a sense of unfitness on his part in academic circles. One must feel that had Bunsen been successful in securing for Fontane early in his career a professorship at Oxford or Cambridge, he would have accepted it with brave front, although he wrote to his wife that the idea was ludicrous.[2] He realized, no doubt, that in England his native tongue would be an asset, in addition to his literary ability and his devotion to letters, upon which he could not expect to count at home; but he seems also to have had something of the adventurer's spirit in the tendency to interpret different national conditions as a less severe standard which he might turn to his advantage. He writes from London:[3]

"Wenn ich erst die Sprache inne haben werde, so wird sich noch manches finden; bedenke, dass man hier nur ein bisschen Wissen und, versteht sich wie überall, ein bisschen Glück zu haben braucht, so ist der Lehrer fertig, wogegen man mich in Deutschland immer nach meinem Pass fragen und mir diese Laufbahn verschliessen wird."

It is, however, only in the early period of struggle for a foothold that any trace of this spirit occurs. He writes to Maximilian Ludwig of the celebration of his seventieth birthday:[4]

"Die Festtage waren sehr schön und haben mir wohlgetan. Trotzdem bedurfte es nicht meiner Skepsis, um ein gut Teil davon nicht

[1] W, 2, XI, 87 (Jan. 1884). Brahm had a university training but was not a scholar by profession.

[2] W, 2, VI, 17.

[3] *L*—(To his wife, dated "2. Pfingstag." Cf. above, p. 5, n. 1.)

[4] W, 2, XI, 240.

recht zu glauben. Für viele war es Ulk, Radau, Mumpitz, und einige fochten mit, deren Devise war: 'Wir wollen doch mal sehen, was man dem Berliner alles einreden kann.'"

Although he adds here that the consciousness of this feeling does not affect him greatly, since one finds it everywhere in life, there is in his non-acceptance of Erich Schmidt's invitation to the Weimar celebration (1896) unquestionable evidence of his tendency to recoil from what might be considered by others an aggressive claim to recognition. He writes:[1]

"Ich habe geantwortet, 'dass ich nicht könne,' was wegen Karlsbad auch wirklich der Fall ist. Aber wenn es auch anders läge, würde ich doch 'weit vom Schuss' zu bleiben suchen. Ich kann mich da nicht mit einem Male gut einreihen. Abgesehen davon, dass einige in den Verwunderungsruf: 'Gott, nun auch hier noch' ausbrechen würden, passe ich wirklich in die Sache nicht recht hinein, weil ich der da zu spielenden Rolle nicht gewachsen bin. Es ist mir gelegentlich passiert, dass ich mit einem lateinischen oder selbst griechischen Zitat wie mit du auf du angeredet worden bin, wobei ich immer das Gefühl gehabt habe: 'Erde tu dich auf' — ein Gefühl, das mir in Weimar leicht noch mal erblühen könnte. Denn trotzdem ich meinen Lewes und sogar meinen Herman Grimm gelesen habe, habe ich doch von Goethewissenschaftlichkeit keinen Schimmer und würde jeden Augenblick die Angst haben: 'Jetzt geht es los.'"

But important as these instances are, they are isolated. When Fontane feels himself upon a footing that involves no apparent claim of equality with scholars and that cannot, therefore, be legitimately denied him, he regards adverse criticism, although sometimes irritated by it, with characteristic objectivity. This fact-sense reveals itself nowhere more strikingly than in a letter to Friedländer concerning the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy, conferred upon him at the end of his seventy-fourth year by the University of Berlin.[2] Without depreciating the value of the honor paid

[1] W, 2, XI, 387 f.

[2] It is interesting to note that in spite of the scorn which Fontane frequently expressed for the methods and influence of scholarship, he was impressed and gratified by this honor. Both the letter cited (cf. W. 2, XI, 330) and the diary express pleasure in it. The latter reads here:

him and at the same time without overestimating his merits, he shows the conviction that in spite of the influence of friends in securing such distinctions, he is as worthy of them as others.

His conception of criticism was indeed in no sense a subterfuge. It had its foundation in the belief that all true art is born necessarily of spontaneous impulse, that the esthetic nature is an incessant creative force, that individuality is a source from which new values may accrue constantly to established norms. It is wholly in keeping with the need of self-expression, which led him personally into the pursuit of letters for a doubtful livelihood. It is in keeping, further, with the place of importance, beside esthetic worth, that he granted to sincere originality in his praise of Scherenberg's poetry, when he said that its essence lay in its separation from tradition and in its tendency, in spite of frequent lack of beauty, to build upon new foundations in content and form.[1]

For Fontane criticism involved, however, a second element equal in importance to the intuitive basis that it required, the *explanation* of the involuntary response of the esthetic sense to external stimulus. He writes (1874) in connection with Wichert's "Die Realisten":[2]

"Das Gefühl, das mich begleitete, war das einer gewissen Nicht-Befriedigung, eines beständigen Gestörtwerdens in eben angeregten Stimmungen. . . . Der Kritik liegt es ob, sich über solche Empfindungen klarzuwerden und das Warum einer gewissen Missstimmung zu ergründen."

This duty of criticism to explain impressions is at times closely connected with the idea that the critic is a molder of public taste. Fontane, accordingly, grants to the critic

"1895. Ich habe hier nachzutragen, dass ich im Nov. oder Dec. 94, kurz vor meinem 75. Geburtstage, seitens der philosoph. Fakultät der Berliner Universität zum Doctor honoris causa ernannt wurde. Eine grosse Freude, die ich wohl Schlenther und Prof. Erich Schmidt verdanke, welch letzterer die Fakultät mobil machte."

[1] W, 2, III, 495.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 211 f.

by no means unlimited freedom. The reflection of individuality advocated by him does not admit of caprice. The esthetic standard, according to which the first involuntary record of approval or disapproval is made, must be stable and must show above all else a response to the test of artistic necessity or artistic truth. He says in his merciless criticism of Frl. Clara Ziegler (1872) that the public stands under the influence of external appeal alone, but the critic must justify what the stage offers on the basis of truth and of unity between underlying thought and visible line and form.[1] In the conclusion of "Hans Lange" he sees (1882) an unnecessary sacrifice of consistency and strength in the character development of Bugslaff, the Duchess, Hans Lange, and the peasant mother, entailing a sacrifice of truth in the effect of the whole. Fontane asserts that his purpose here is to call the attention of the public to a weakness in organic development, not to suggest to the writer how he shall improve his work.[2]

"Nichts ist misslicher, als einen Dichter beraten wollen; was man ihm sagen kann, hat er sich längst vorher gesagt. . . . Aber was der Dichter weiss, das Publikum weiss es *nicht*, oder doch nicht immer. So stehe dann nur seinetwillen hier, was ich zu sagen habe."

The fact that Fontane had in hand a work of Heyse may have prompted this explanation in part. His criticism of Heyse is in the main apparently both open and just. Occasionally, however, it shows a startling amount of consideration given to a mediocre play, as in the report on "Das Recht der Stärkeren,"[3] and in such cases it does not carry conviction with it. It seems restrained, at times by the sense of professional courtesy, at times, in the absence of spontaneous approval, by the fear of yielding unconsciously to personal prejudice. He and Heyse had had different ideas of art from the early days in the Tunnel, and Heyse's supe-

[1] W, 2, VIII, 346.

[2] *V. Z.* Oct. 18, B 1. — This criticism, Fontane states, is based on the revised play, which brings the original five acts into the compass of four and thus gains in brevity.

[3] Cf. *V. Z.* Jan. 18, 1884, B 1.

rior attitude had always irritated him. He wrote in 1851 that Heyse considered everything poor that was not by Goethe or himself,[1] and as late as 1889 that Heyse could not accustom himself to the fact that taste changed in the course of fifty years.[2] His relations with Heyse were not unfriendly. They continued to exchange occasional letters and visits after Heyse left Berlin for Munich, and Heyse even attempted to secure for Fontane the position of secretary to King Maximilian of Bavaria,[3] through which Fontane would have been closely associated with the Munich circle of poets. But there was never any deep sympathy between them. Fontane was more than ordinarily interested in Heyse's triumphs, his productivity, his lyric gift, but he felt that Heyse had no very flattering opinion of his ability[4] and confesses on one occasion a sense of uneasiness when he has a report on one of Heyse's dramas in hand. The method used here — of testing by consistency and truth — is, however, most common in Fontane's work. His recensions of "Hans Lange" show uniformly, moreover, that he gives this drama high rank except for its conclusion. The judgment pronounced here must therefore be accepted as sincere, whether the expression of purpose is one largely of courtesy or not.

Certain secondary restrictions limit even further the critic's method. The nature of a criticism should depend, in Fontane's opinion, to some extent upon the standing of the author whose work is in question. Therefore, he applies an entirely different norm to a tragedy by Grillparzer or Otto Ludwig and to a comedy by Lubliner.[5] He admits that there is such a thing as imposing upon the spectator, but feels that the critic should recognize the obligation of the stage to amuse to the extent of not condemning an unpretentious play when it involves a happy idea and affords pleasure.[6]

The critic must take into consideration also the purpose of the author. He says in connection with Lindau's "Gräfin

[1] W, 2, X, 35.
[2] W, 2, XI, 234.
[3] Cf. W. 2, VI, 103 ff.
[4] W, 2, XI, 99.
[5] W, 2, VIII, 274.
[6] *V. Z.* Oct. 12, 1871, B 2.

Lea" (1880) that it is unreasonable to compare it with "Nathan der Weise" since Lindau's only purpose was to write a play of social life, not primarily to give dramatic form to a discussion of the race question.[1] He defends warmly Heyse's "Die Weisheit Salomos" (1888), insisting that it is wrong to criticize this play adversely on the basis of historic inaccuracy.[2]

". . . *die historische Betrachtung* auf Seiten der Kritik ist gut und mitunter sogar unerlässlich, aber doch immer nur da, wo der Dichter selbst es will und dem, der ihn zu beurteilen hat, den entsprechenden Massstab in die Hand drückt."

This instance has peculiar interest not only because it concerns a work of Heyse — and one not received with favor by critics in general — but especially because it has to do with the point of poetic license in the treatment of history and represents a complete change of view on the part of the critic in the course of his experience. In 1870, Fontane had pronounced Goethe's conception of Egmont, which had been the delight of his youth, an atrocity (Greuel), an historic sin. He admitted that a masterly portrayal made it acceptable on the stage but said nevertheless:[3]

"Wer fünfzig Jahre alt ist, Geschichte gelesen und in sich aufgenommen hat, kann dem 'Heros deutscher Nation' dieses Attentat gegen eins der schönsten Kapitel der Geschichte der Menschheit nicht verzeihen."

There is certainly no suggestion here of the principle of molding judgment in accordance with the purpose of the author, yet it is a principle to which Fontane was faithful in the main. He does not at any time take exception to Schiller's free adaptation of history in "Die Jungfrau von Orleans" and "Maria Stuart," and in 1880 he admits that even Egmont may be made convincing by an actor who really grasps Goethe's conception of this hero and can give the figure its distinctive historic-romantic stamp, the basic element which is its very essence.[4]

This condition, valuable in determining the worth of the

[1] W, 2, VIII, 243 ff.
[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 21, B 1.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 49 f., 54 f.
[4] *Ibid.*

critic's message, does not affect the directness of his work or absolve him from a truthful expression of opinion. The duty of criticism is to speak the truth, only under exceptional conditions to perform the offices of comfort and support [1] (1880). Berlin criticism is in Fontane's opinion miserable in all its branches, lacking in spirit and not free from restraint [2] (1886). The diary note in objection to Lindau's attitude toward "The Lady from the Sea" (1889) is: "Lindau weiss nicht recht, ob er loben oder tadeln, bewundern oder verwerfen soll." There is an indirect repetition, too, (1891) of the charge of lack of truth in Fontane's attack upon the uncertain fumbling and groping prevalent among critics. He writes to his daughter that they are like criminals, afraid of betraying themselves before court by something that might some time be turned against them.[3]

The nature of successful criticism is further defined by the obligation which Fontane lays upon it to point out the intrinsic significance of a work, the points in it that make it distinctive or valuable. This opinion, taken from a letter to Fontane's publisher, Wilhelm Herz, was called forth by criticisms, lacking penetration, directed against his "Wanderungen," and the irritation that he felt led him here to a sweeping subsequent statement, seeming to condemn all contemporary German criticism.[4] The general statement of repudiation may, however, be called into question without incriminating Fontane's sincerity in the basic demand involved here for able criticism.

This demand is, indeed, reflected repeatedly in his work. He praises Brahm's sensitiveness, insight, and style (1882), but tells him that the vital point is lacking in his criticism of Paul Heyse.[5] The passage referred to is as follows:

[1] W, 2, VIII, 38.

[2] W, 2, XI, 114 — from a letter to Moritz Lazarus in which he expresses surprise that so little notice is taken of the Wereschtschagin exhibition.

[3] W, 2, VII, 242.

[4] W, 2, XI, 71 f.

[5] W, 2, XI, 74 f. — It was characteristic of Fontane that beauty of form could never make him entirely insensible to a false note in content. Brahm's essay (*Westermanns Illustrierte Monatshefte*, Bd. 53, S. 246 ff.)

"Ja, ich bin mit meinem Lobe noch nicht fertig, finde die Grundauffassung Heyses durchaus richtig und stimme, wenigstens vielfach, auch dem Detail zu, das der Aufsatz bringt. Dies Wort 'Detail' wähl' ich absichtlich, weil ich das Wort 'Urteil' oder auch nur 'Einzelurteil' vermeiden möchte. Sie sehen nun schon, worauf ich hinaus will. Sie haben Heyse sorgfältig untersucht und der im Nebenzimmer ängstlich wartenden Familie das mitgeteilt, was diese, Pardon, schon wusste. . . . Aber die Schlüsse daraus haben Sie nicht gezogen und haben der Familie nicht mitgeteilt, ob er leben oder sterben muss. Und darauf kommt es an. . . . Wir dürfen von jedem, der sich an Heyse heranmacht, ein persöhnliches Farbebekennen in diesen wichtigen Fragen erwarten und verlangen. . . . In Ihrem Aufsatze ist nicht Liebe, nicht Hass. Sie sagen im einzelnen eine Menge hübscher, geistvoller, witziger, auch sehr zutreffender Sachen . . . aber das eigentliche Wort, das Wort, auf das es ankommt, wird *nicht* gesprochen. Ich stehe persöhnlich so zu Heyse, dass ich ihn für das grösste, noch mehr für das reichste Talent halte, das wir zur Zeit in Deutschland besitzen, dessen Bedeutung aber durch einen falschen Tropfen in seinem Blut immer wieder in Frage gestellt, in vielen seinen Productionen einfach vernichtet wird. Wär' ich der jüngere, könnt' ich, ihn überlebend, in die Lage kommen, über ihn zu schreiben, ich würd' ihn in meinem Essay sehr hoch und sehr tief stellen und das Verkehrte und schliesslich doch auch sehr Unkonsequente seiner Lebensanschauungen und seines Liebeskatechismus zu beweisen suchen. Heyse, den ich sehr liebe, weiss auch, dass ich so über ihn denke."

An objection similar to that brought against Brahm in this particular essay Fontane applies in a more general way to Paul Lindau. He writes (1883) that Lindau is clever and entertaining, but that in matters of chief concern he often fails to hit the nail on the head.[1] Again, there is reference to indistinctness or inaptness in Fontane's rejection (1883) of the common tendency to put an author in one definite

shows appreciation of Heyse's art; it is fruitful of suggestion concerning Heyse's pessimistic philosophy of life and his exaltation of the passion of love; it does not define what Fontane considered a fatal flaw in Heyse's work, an elusive esthetic weakness, — a lack of organic harmony, due to a circumscribed conception of the truths of life.

[1] W, 2, VII, 46.

category for all time, simply because it is a convenient method of procedure.

But direct treatment of salient and distinctive characteristics does not involve severity, the charge he brings occasionally against Paul Schlenther, whom alone he names in the same class with Otto Brahm in points of cleverness, understanding, and style. He considers Schlenther's judgment of von Hülsen's direction of the Royal Stage (Berlin) and its results not entirely just (1883), since it fails to take into account the fact that neither Vienna, Munich, Dresden, nor Hamburg can show a better sum total within the two decades previous to this date.[1] Fontane could not have disapproved of the high ideal upheld in this pamphlet, since he kept an unattained ideal in view constantly in his own reports. But his work shows throughout a full consideration of the difficulties involved in the hoped-for attainment. He writes to Schlenther similarly (1886) that the art of finding plays bad and saying so in complimentary terms has not yet been discovered, but that he considers Schlenther's judgment of L'Arronge's "Loreley" nevertheless more severe than necessary.[2]

In spite of Fontane's demand that criticism mean self-expression, the conviction is constantly apparent that it may not be used to exploit personal prejudice or to accrue to personal advantage. It must be simply a truthful exponent of art. It excludes, therefore, both hero-worship and annihilation.[3] For this same reason, notwithstanding the high valuation he puts on cleverness, he emphasizes the point that brilliance and wit can be made nothing more than ac-

[1] The reference is to Schlenther's "Botho v. Hülsen und seine Leute." — Fontane suggests later in the discussion of this pamphlet that the radical nature of it indicates a desire on Schlenther's part to play somewhere the role of a Heinrich Laube. It is an interesting coincidence that Dr. Schlenther was called in 1898 to the position Laube had once held as theater-director (W, 2, VII, 80 f.).

[2] W, 2, XI, 108 f.

[3] (1889) He regrets Frenzel's indulgence in malice and his extreme position in regard to "The Lady from the Sea" (W, 2, VII, 249; VIII, 205).

cessories in criticism. He prizes wit in Lindau (1875), but only because he finds it in connection with more important factors rarely found in unison, — good training and good sense (Schulung, bon sens) and a wealth of happy ideas.[1] He states (1883) that his reference to real critical gifts in Blumenthal does not mean his wit, which is secondary in criticism.[2] He mentions wit (1886) among the critical assets of Schlenther and Brahm, but it is primarily the qualities of judgment, training, style, freedom from brutality and caddishness which make them in his opinion model critics.[3] In acknowledging the fine points in Otto Pniower's criticism of "Irrungen, Wirrungen," he speaks (1888) of a happy change in conditions, through which not wit alone but the serious pursuit of truth has come to fulfil the function of the critic.[4] Displeased (1889) at the superficiality of the press-criticisms of "Vor Sonnenaufgang," he writes:[5]

"Das alles sind Schimpfereien und Ulkereien, als Ulke zum Teil sehr gut, aber auf das Eigentlichste hin angesehn oberflächlich und böswillig, entweder ohne jedes wahre Kunstverständnis geschrieben oder unter Zurückdrängung aller besseren Einsicht. Es ist lächerlich, diesen jungen Kerl so mit der landläufigen Phrase, dass er auch ein bisschen Talent habe, abspeisen zu wollen. Das ist gar nichts. 'Ein bisschen Talent' hat jeder. Das kann man von jedem dritten Menschen sagen. Hauptmann hat ein grosses, ein seltenes Talent."

The conscious parade of knowledge also is unnecessary and distasteful to Fontane in criticism. Conrad Alberti's sensational exposition of the points of weakness in the management of the Royal Stage (1889) he considers void of new ideas. He expresses gratitude that Minister von Gossler did not summon him instead of Alberti for an interview on the problems of the stage, but says that he could have given him better, more natural, and truer suggestions. This is not a revelation of strictly personal feeling; Fontane was not jealous of the honor shown to a younger man. His magnanim-

[1] W, 2, VIII, 239.
[2] W, 2, VII, 46.
[3] W, 2, XI, 111 f.
[4] W, 2, XI, 160.
[5] W, 2, XI, 222.

ity and his disinterested devotion to art show themselves in a sympathetic regard for the ability of the younger generation so marked as to make him a unique figure in literature; but he demanded that every approach to art be sincere, that every contribution that laid claim to artistic merit be the expression of an irresistible impulse, free from utilitarian motives. The dominant feeling in this specific case is extreme irritation at the lack of appreciation of more capable men. The less spectacular work of Brahm and Frenzel is in Fontane's opinion superior to that of Alberti in both tone and practical import.[1] He does not deny the talent of Alberti and Bleibtreu, but their ostentatious assumption of superiority argues to him a degree of self-seeking incompatible with genuine inspiration and the true exposition of art values.

Other phases of this parade of knowledge, to which Fontane objects, are what he calls at one place (1886) the "Allesbesserwissen" of the Scherer school — with their tendency to make philology the basis of justification; at another place (1891), the hypersagacity of critics who probe after truth to such an extent that the result is an impression of utter lack of truth.[2] The term 'lack of truth' (höchste Unwahrheit)

[1] W, 2, XI, 176 ff. — The title of Alberti's book is "Ohne Schminke, Wahrheiten über das moderne Theater" (Leipzig, 1887). — Frenzel's discussion, "Die Zukunft des Schauspielhauses" (cf. above p. 17, n. 1) treats the long hegemony of the Royal Stage in Berlin, the establishment of a so-called folk-stage in Berlin (Belle-Alliance Theater) to encourage striving playwrights and actors, the beneficial influence of the Meiningen players, the strength of the "Deutches Theater" in classic repertoire, 1883–88, the decline of the Royal Stage during the same time — in both repertoire and the training of actors, due to v. Hülsen's failure to advance the younger actors and to the death of older favorites. — Fontane writes of Alberti: "Und nun kommt Alberti, zunächst doch nichts als ein letzter Ausläufer dieser jetzt modischen, breitspurigen, jugendgrünen Weisheit, und orakelt dem Minister etwas vor. . . . Unter den Stücken, die er zur Annahme empfiehlt, ist auch eins von Alberti. Dabei trifft es sich sehr komisch, dass er — da er bei der Aufzählung tüchtiger dramatischer Kräfte nach dem Buchstaben ging — eigentlich mit sich selbst hätte anfangen müssen. Er hat aber doch Anzengruber (mit An) seinem Alberti (mit Al) vorgestellt, weil ihm dieser Vortritt doch zu misslich vorkommen mochte."

[2] W, 2, XI, 111, 261 f.

seems to mean here — if this statement be compared with others concerning criticism — absence of that involuntary response to the esthetic impression, which is the critic's basic requisite.

Fontane's judgment of what he terms the academic element in criticism is at times, however, ill-grounded. He writes of Dr. Schlenther's lecture on Ibsen (1889) that it is clever, striking in parts, but not convincing (erobernd), — a little academic in effect.[1] This lecture, the purpose of which was obviously to arouse intelligent enthusiasm for Ibsen's work in Vienna, shows, in fact, nothing more than a skilful union of appreciative criticism with the necessary background of fact and a clear, brief exposition of content. Another instance of Fontane's antipathy to anything smacking of learned criticism is his failure to recognize the purpose of Max Nordau in "Einiges über Schillers Don Carlos" (1896). Nordau's intention was distinctly *not* an appreciation of Schiller's art or a study of the structure of the drama, but a discussion of the influences bearing upon the work in the process of production.[2] Fontane's comment on Nordau's articles is distinctly unsympathetic in spite of his admission that, if he remembers correctly, Brahm's book on Schiller contains similar points:

"Mit Shakespeare macht er nicht Umstände, und Schiller kommt auch nur noch gerade mit 'nem blauen Auge davon. Liest man das alles, so erscheint einem Schiller wie der Drucker, Herausgeber, und Gesamtredakteur des 'Friesacker Anzeigers,' der seinen 'Don Carlos' aus damaligen Zeitungsnotizen zusammen geklebt hat. Was wir jetzt im 'Don Carlos' haben, ist danach ein dramatisierter Leitfaden zur Zeitgeschichte von 1770 bis 1790, Salat, Kompendiumgemengsel. Nordau erkennt nicht mal an, dass Schiller, das Mindeste zu sagen, wenigstens mit einer vorzüglichen Wurstmaschine gearbeitet hat."

[1] W, 2, XI, 183 f. This lecture appeared in *Zur guten Stunde* (1889), 203 f.

[2] Among these influences Nordau considers the episode of the Diamond Necklace, enthusiasm for Shakspere, and certain character types from the Shakspere histories, such as the tyrant, the court-intriguer, the pathetic prince (*V. Z.* Dec. 18–20, 1896). — Fontane's comments are found W. 2, XI, 406 ff.

Fontane's own aim in criticism may be inferred from his judgment of the work of others as treated up to this point. He makes in addition various scattered confessions in regard to his work and his fitness for it. His first important reference to his own critical qualities occurs in the correspondence with the actor, Maximilian Ludwig, concerning his adverse verdict against the role of Uriel Acosta. He asserts here (1873) that he is justified in his *métier* by fineness of feeling and a sense for art; that he has unconditional faith in the correctness of his impressions (Empfindung); and that if this were not the case he would lay down the critic's pen.[1] He is conscious, therefore, of possessing what to him is the fundamental requisite for this branch of his work.

This statement of confidence, although not restricted, was made to bear directly upon literature and can hardly be applied to other forms of art. Dr. Schlenther says of Fontane, to be sure, that his critical impulse found expression through the medium of the theater simply because this avenue for income opened to him, an opinion based partly upon the readiness with which he had agreed to contribute art reports to the *Kreuzzeitung*, partly upon the fact that the stage was to him only one of several places where life might be portrayed in artistic form.[2] This opinion Fontane's correspondence substantiates to a certain degree; his published letters to friends contain discussions of picture galleries as detailed as those of books, and the unpublished letters from Italy to his wife indicate a keener interest in art than in literature. But a nature deeply sensitive to art in any form is likely to respond with something of a thrill to all its forms, and the interest in plastic art is naturally uppermost in the course of a limited sojourn in Italy. Moreover, Fontane confesses at one point that he felt less confidence in his judgment of art than in that of the stage. He wrote to Karl Zöllner from Naples (1874) that he should on

[1] W, 2, X, 308 f.
[2] W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, VI.

his return have to be wary in expressing an opinion on painting:[1]

"In die Heimat zurückgekehrt, werde ich meine Zunge sehr hüten müssen, auch schon deshalb, weil ich selber sehr wohl empfinde, dass es mir nach einer ganz bestimmten Seite hin an etwas sehr Wesentlichem gebricht, was mein Urteil einseitig und ungerecht macht. Lägen die Dinge günstiger, so würde ich mich mit einem wahren Feuereifer in diese Fragen stürzen und in einem Tone losgehen wie etwa über die Iphigenie der Frau Erhartt."

In Fontane's last year as critic of the Royal Theater several expressions of lack of confidence in his ability occur. He writes (Jan. 19) — again to Zöllner — in connection with the Alberti discussion that he doubts his judgment at times, but only temporarily, that he is usually so sure of himself that he might be classed in this respect with the Albertis and Bleibtreus.[2] To his daughter he writes (Apr. 13) that he feels enviable confidence as a rule in his judgment of novels, stories, and poems, but that he often experiences difficulty in judging a new play, especially as it appeals to him from the stage. The examples which he cites in this instance prove, however, that he is writing under the sway of an extreme mood. Such a statement as that he sees hardly any difference between "Iphigenie," "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen," "Die Weisheit Salomos" and "Nausikaa" is capable of no other interpretation.[3]

Over against this testimony must be set the facts of his stand against Schlenther and Brahm in some points of Ibsen criticism, and his direct and definite response to the dramas of Gerhart Hauptmann. Brahm, reporting on the first performance of "Ghosts" in Berlin (Jan. 1887) and the astonishment of even some of the freest thinkers at the revolt in esthetics which this play represents, said of Fontane:

[1] W, 2, X, 347. — Fr. Erhartt was one of the actresses of the Royal Theater.

[2] Cf. above, p. 47, n. 1.

[3] W, 2, VII, 193 f. — On "Die Weisheit Salomos" cf. above, p. 42; "Nausikaa" (Hermann Schreyer) was criticized by Fontane as undramatic (*V. Z.* Apr. 13, 1889, B 1).

"Ich sehe mich noch mit dem alten Weisen, Theodor Fontane, streitend durch die Strassen irren, um das Residenztheater herum." [1] Fontane was evidently not to be won unconditionally for Ibsen. He wrote (Aug. 1889) that Schlenther and Brahm lacked maturity (Reife) in their judgment of Ibsen's treatment of the marriage problem.[2] A few months later in discussing Gerhart Hauptmann (Oct. 22), his art, his understanding of structure and general dramatic technic, he wrote that he himself had perhaps more insight into the questions connected with Hauptmann's work than other critics. The only conclusion to draw is that neither individuality nor self-confidence was on the verge of annihilation in Fontane even when he gave up his regular activity as critic.

The first demand that Fontane made of a critic, the involuntary response to an esthetic impression, he considered absolute — in so far as anything is absolute — and he felt that this faculty of correct sensibility had been laid in his cradle at birth.[3] But he realized also that a critic might possess this absolute essential, which is or is not within him, irrespective of zeal or cultivation, and yet fail to some extent in his work. A critic cannot exist without the esthetic sense, but it is the union of this sense with the ability to explain esthetic impressions that produces able criticism. In regard to this relative factor of explanation, Fontane was always conscious of weakness in himself. He practically admits such a shortcoming (1873) in the correspondence with Maximilian Ludwig, referred to before,[4] and earlier than this (1871) he disclaims looking upon his opinion as the final word: [5]

[1] Otto Brahm, "Kritische Schriften über Drama und Theater," hrsg. v. Paul Schlenther (Berlin, 1913). — The performance of "Ghosts," referred to here, was at the Residenz Theater in Berlin. The argument in question probably occurred in an intermission.

[2] W, 2, XI, 207. [3] W, 2, X, 308 f.; cf. above, p. 49.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] W, 2, VIII, 419; additional, *V. Z.* Oct. 3, B 2; this citation is in connection with grateful recognition of a successful ensemble performance of Heyse's "Elisabeth Charlotte."

"Denn die Anmassung liegt mir fern, mich als eine letzte, unfehlbare Instanz anzusehn, von der aus kein Appell an Höheres denkbar ist. Wer mich aufmerksam liest, wird deshalb in steter Wiederkehr Aeusserungen finden wie etwa: 'es will mir scheinen', 'ich hatte den Eindruck', 'ich gebe anheim'. Das ist nicht die Sprache eines absoluten Besserwissers."

Twenty years of experience, and the fact that he had in the meantime been asked to act as critic for the performances of the Deutsches Theater [1] and of the French players [2] seem to have effected little change in his opinion of his own powers. He writes to his daughter (1891) that he never considered himself a great critic, that in knowledge and keenness he is far inferior to such men as Brahm, but that his directness and honesty at least must have been refreshing to his readers.[3] The term 'knowledge' might mean here a wider acquaintance with literature, due to wider experience or university training, since both Schlenther and Brahm were university men. The term 'keenness' can have to do only with ability in exposition, in answering the question "Why" in regard to sensations and impressions.

However Fontane may have felt about this element in his work, he was undoubtedly freer than most critics from some qualities that limit esthetic insight and render improbable a just and open verdict. Neither personal prejudice nor a tendency to blinding enthusiasm enters into his criticism. He says (1873) that he is free from the worship of names and from following the cult of literary heroes; [4] (1875) that antagonisms are far from his nature. His admiration could mount to a high level of enthusiasm without drowning the sound of the steady inner voice that pronounced esthetic verdicts, as in the cases of Schiller, Otto Ludwig, Ibsen, Hauptmann, Holz, and Schlaf. His condemnation could be severe without any attempt at annihilation, as in the case of Lubliner's "Gabriele," Brachvogel's "Narziss," Gutzkow's

[1] 1883; cf. above, p. 17.

[2] Cf. *V. Z.* 1874, '77, '78, '79 (Jan.–Apr.); these numbers contain his reports on the French players in Berlin; cf. above, p. xvii.

[3] W. 2. VII, 242 ff. [4] W, 2, X, 308.

"Uriel Acosta," and Scribe's "Les doigts de fée."[1] This does not mean that he never condemned absolutely. He could not have performed ably the function of criticizing the plays produced on the Royal Stage between 1870 and 1889 without doing so. There are frequent expressions of regret from him that blame outweighs praise in his work. But the absolute rejection of plays that he attempted to criticize seriously at all is rare. He writes of von Mosenthal's "Sirene," for instance:[2]

"Das Stück ist nicht schlecht, es füllt seinen Abend, aber es ist schlimmer als schlecht, es ist *trivial*. *Trivial* in der Idee, trivial in den Characteren, trivial in der Sprache. Ich möchte noch hinzusetzen: trivial auch in der Gesinnung. Dazu auch hier wieder die Wahrnehmung, dass die Gestalten, die uns das Leben schildern sollen, *nicht aus dem Leben selber*, sondern aus dritter respective siebenter Hand genommen sind, *aus dem alten elenden Bestande* herkömmlicher, vielleicht *nie* wahrgewesener Bühnenfiguren. . . ."

Again, of Moser's "Reflexe":[3]

"Wie kann man dergleichen schreiben, vor allem wie kann man dergleichen aufführen! . . . Wohin sind wir gekommen? Und wir glauben, *uns über französische Ehebruchsstücke* moquiren zu dürfen. Dies ist ja alles viel bedenklicher. Und dabei hohl, hohl. . . ."

The usual course, however, in his reports is the consideration of vulnerable as well as commendable points in the masterpieces of master-minds, or the recognition of promise, however slight it may be, in the work of the untrained, unpolished playwright, the acknowledgment, in works that could by no means be ranked as art, of any bits capable of use in a more perfect structure.

Work based upon such foundations was naturally not taken lightly. Dr. Schlenther testifies that no one was ever admitted to Fontane when a criticism was in progress.[4]

[1] The criticisms referred to here are found W, 2, VIII; the references in order of mention are as follows: 61 f., 148 ff., 180–193 ff., 300–310 ff., 313 ff., 277 ff., 170, 143 ff., 112 ff.

[2] *V. Z.* Dec. 15, 1874, B 1.

[3] *V. Z.* Jan. 3, 1878, B 3.

[4] W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, IV.

Fontane himself confesses that it was a serious matter, that he often asked himself the question whether he could be responsible for what he wrote.[1] Even the casual reader of the "Causerien über Theater" will be impressed with the fact that cases of testing a previous verdict are frequent in criticism both of dramatic composition and of stage portrayal. The critic says with gratitude, for example, of Adolf Klein's impersonation that it proves his own demands neither false nor unreasonable.[2]

Fontane recognized, furthermore, from the beginning, the peculiar difficulty involved in worthy and just criticism of the acted drama. He writes (1873) that a play makes a new claim on a critic every moment and gives no time to test subtle points for the explanation of shortcomings.[3] In the extreme statement to his daughter (1889) in regard to his lack of discrimination at times in judging a drama, the difficulty lies in the acted play and in following and estimating quickly the importance of details. The introduction to his criticism of "Vor Sonnenaufgang" indicates that for him there was a problem in every scene, since he did not take the easier course of denunciation or of unreserved praise.[4] The fact that there was a wide gulf frequently between his high ideal and the dramatic or histrionic attainment with which he had to deal, did not tend to decrease the burden of his undertaking. Again and again the note of sense of duty occurs; and *duty* for the critic meant to Fontane — as is obvious from this discussion — the conscientious application of esthetic and intellectual faculties, with no thought of personal advantage, n reporting truth.

"Ich bin nicht dazu da, *öffentliche Billetdoux* zu schreiben' sondern die Wahrheit zu sagen oder das, was mir als Wahrheit scheint." [5]

[1] W, 2, X, 308.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 371 f.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 420.
[4] W, 2, VIII, 300.
[5] W, 2, VIII, 419 (1871).

CHAPTER III

Fontane's Practical Suggestions for the Elevation of the Stage

"Den höchsten Anlauf . . . nahm die Menschennatur, als sie einen gothischen Dom in seiner Vollendung *dachte*. Aber er ist ein Ideal geblieben und mit Recht; denn das Vollendete muss unvollendet bleiben. *Die fertigen gotischen Dome sind nicht vollendet und die vollendeten sind nicht fertig.*" — Th. Fontane (W, 2, VI, 9 f.).

Every serious critic is to some degree an educator. This is especially true of the critic whose work includes a constructive as well as a destructive element; nor does the statement involve unquestioned acceptance of the principles according to which he would build. The very negation of existing conditions and the suggestion of substitutes arouse the critical attitude in others, and affect public sentiment — if only indirectly.

The worth of both the destructive and the constructive in Fontane's criticism has been largely overlooked. His work has been considered primarily a record of impressions upon a rather erratic plate, and therefore of value chiefly as a revelation of an original and versatile personality. Richard M. Meyer says that in the "Causerien" it is only human beings — especially the actors themselves — that interest the writer,[1] although he redeems the statement by an addition to the effect that where actual people are portrayed (as in Ibsen and Hauptmann), or where the result falls short of the intention to present real life, Fontane rarely erred in a time practically blind to such distinctions. Otto Ernst alone gives him definite rank in the unequivocal assertion, unsupported,

[1] Richard M. Meyer, "Die deutsche Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts," 3. umgearbeitete Auflage (Berlin, 1906), 556.

however, by facts or proofs, that he is the most important critic of the theater that Germany has had since Lessing.[1]

Even casual reading of the two men reveals these striking points of similarity, with whatever differences in temperament, purpose, and conditions they may be attended: both were ardent believers in the worth of art; both were imbued with a passion for truth; both brought to their work a spirit of admirable patriotism; both united in their work the destructive and constructive elements.

Destruction may rest entirely on a basis of theory. Construction may be largely theoretical, but in order to be enduring it must take into consideration practice as well. Fontane's constructive criticism has to do, like Lessing's, with both; but his methods are altogether different. He found a strong basic theory adapted to German drama already in existence. This he accepted for the most part without any show of opposition, although it was not his belief that any generation could establish an unalterable law for all time. His constructive work is limited to improvement and extension, to the perfection of harmony between the various parts, and to the development of detail. He could not call dramas into being to illustrate his principles, as did Lessing; but keeping the vision of a new national drama and a powerful national stage before him, he made continuous suggestions for changes in scene, in general structure, in the dramatic or poetic conception of a play, and for the performance of worthy plays according to the ideas of the author. The scope of these suggestions becomes apparent only by separating scattered bits from their context and massing them together. Then only are the full proportions of the ideal toward which he worked revealed: the disinterested co-operation of writer, director, actors, and public in behalf of a complete whole.

His message to the public, most severe of all, is almost entirely one of denunciation for pleasure in the mediocre and for failure, therefore, to appreciate and demand the best.

[1] Otto Ernst (Schmidt), "Blühender Lorbeer" (Leipzig, 1910), 18.

Lacking an esthetic standard by which to judge, the audience shows no discrimination between the typical and the individual in interpretation; between the external and the internal in the portrayal of passion; between mere temporary effect and consistent natural motivation. They accept affectation for reality; sentimentality for power. They are ruled by prejudice or by prevailing sentiment. Fontane writes of Wünzer's portrayal of Louis XIV in Heyse's "Elisabeth Charlotte" and of the attitude of the public:[1]

"Wem die Palme des Abends gebührt, ist nicht leicht zu entscheiden; wir meinen indess *Herrn Wünzer* als Ludwig dem XIV. Wir sprechen dies um so lieber aus, als Herr Wünzer im Allgemeinen nicht das fragwürdige Glück hat, zu den Lieblingen des Publikums zu gehören. O Publikum. — Eine so glänzende Leistung, dass Herr Wünzer nach jeder einzelnen Scene Anspruch auf Beifall und Hervorruf gehabt hätte, aber Herr Wünzer steht nicht auf der Liste derer, die, sie mögen spielen wie sie wollen, unter allen Umständen beklatscht werden müssen. Ein einziges Mal regten sich zwei Hände und ihr leiser verschämter Klang hallte, beinah komisch, durch das stumm verbleibende Haus. Diese zwei Hände gehörten dem Unterzeichneten."

Spectators lack all sense of responsibility as to their part in the maintenance of art. That writers, directors, and actors are influenced by the decadent taste and even cater to it Fontane indicates in his criticism of Lubliner's "Gabriele" (1878), in large part an imaginative description of how Lubliner and modern writers of his type proceed;[2] beginning perhaps with an extremely effective original sketch, they add extraneous elements to appeal to popular favor until eventually half of the initial charm must be sacrificed in order to give the whole some ultimate form. Fontane expresses surprise (1881) in a letter to Hertz that he has heard nothing concerning a presentation of Heyse's "Weiber von Schorndorf." The public, he adds, demands in a play either love or a question of the day.[3]

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 3, 1871, B 2.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 277 f.
[3] W, 2, XI, 30.

They fail either to appreciate the national element in such a playwright as Benedix, or to give the support to real art that would call forth writers of higher rank. In a report on "Der Traum ein Leben" (1889) Fontane makes the statement that an increased demand and longing for real poetry would again produce such poets as Grillparzer.[1]

Fontane's demand of the public is not exorbitant. He realizes (1881) that it is not possible to raise millions of people to the height of esthetic appreciation of art, but it is reasonable to ask of them a distinction between sense and nonsense.[2] There is undoubtedly personal feeling, a reflection of personal experience, in part, in his vehement words from 1886.[3]

"In den Augen des grossen Publikums kann der Dichter nie genug hungern; es ist sozusagen seine Spezialität, und je fester der Schmachtriemen ihm angezogen wird, desto reiner seine Lyrik. . . . Bessere Dichterzeiten als am Versailler und Weimarer Hofe hat es nie gegeben, und die jetzt existierende Abhängigkeit vom Geschmacke des Publikums oder wohl gar von den Launen eines die Hand krampfhaft auf dem Beutel haltenden Buchhändlers ist keineswegs ein Idealzustand daneben."

But sixteen years of regular contact with the audiences of the Royal Theater, and of observation of the taste they manifested, are behind these words as well.

In Fontane's suggestions to writers, the theoretical and the practical are present in fairly equal proportions. It is convenient here, however, in order to avoid confusion and repetition, to attempt a separation of the two elements, to bar for the present details which have to do more particularly with theory, and to consider here only the influence Fontane endeavors to exert on directing the current of production into what he believes to be proper channels.

It may be due in part to the fact that he kept in mind the difficulties involved in play-making that his attitude is

[1] W, 2, VIII, 109.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 172. (From report on Brachvogel's "Narziss.")
[3] W, 2, VIII, 165 f.

rarely one of absolute repudiation. It is no doubt due in part also to his pronounced predilection for the distinctive element, or for discovering the basis for this element, in things to the general observer not more than ordinary. He writes (1871) in his report on a one-act play by von Putlitz ("Zwei Tassen"):[1]

"Man wird einräumen . . ., es ist ein sehr kleiner Stoff, aber *er ist nicht so klein, dass er nicht* hinreissend sein könnte. Ja, wir erklären offen, dass wir für solche Kleinigkeiten eine ganz besondere Vorliebe haben, wenn das, was nun endlich da ist, uns als etwas in seiner Art Perfektes berührt."

It is, indeed, only reasonable to expect in Fontane's dramatic criticism traces of a fondness for detail that is evident throughout other branches of his prose work. This quality reveals itself in almost every page of the "Wanderungen" and determines to some extent his method in narrative.[2]

But Fontane's recognition of plays involving little art is due also to his belief that the theater should afford entertainment as well as elevation, and that the German repertoire was lacking in this respect. His personal preferences were not in the line of the amusement play. He writes (1871):[3]

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 12, B 2.

[2] It is Fontane's ability to charm and hold his readers through the commonplace occurrences of life to which Otto Ernst refers when he says that he read to the sixteenth chapter of "Cecile" before he noticed that nothing had happened (*op. cit.*, 17). Fontane himself says of his narrative work (W, 2, VII, 80): "wer auf *plots* und grosse Geschehnisse wartet, ist verloren. Für solche Leute schreib' ich nicht." As a rule things do not happen in Fontane's narratives as in a novel of clear, structural outline; "Irrungen, Wirrungen" and "Effi Briest" have a compelling human appeal that holds the reader without any striking external structure of which he is conscious. In "Der Stechlin" the unifying principle is the personality of the central figure; "Vor dem Sturm" Julius Rodenberg termed a series of prose ballads, and so fine was the implication of lack of general unity of the usual kind involved in this term that Fontane himself understood for the first time what others had meant by the charge of loose construction brought against the novel (cf. W, 2, X, 407 ff.).

[3] W, 2, VIII, 71 f. — This report is a grateful acknowledgment of "Die Piccolomini."

"Kleines, Abziehendes, Zerstreuendes darf sich nicht nur einmischen, es soll es sogar, aber es darf in der Rang- und Stufenleiter der Dinge dadurch nichts verändert, es dürfen die Ideale nicht aufgegeben werden. . . . nach langer Herrschaft des Burlesken . . . steigt eben jetzt wieder die Flut, und die Sehnsucht wächst, aus der elenden Flachheit herauszukommen. Wie jeder in unsern Tagen ein Verlangen in sich trägt, im Juli und August einen Trunk Bergluft zu tun, so ist auch ein Verlangen da, in Wintertagen einen frischen Trunk Schiller zu tun."

In a report on Gottschall's "Pitt and Fox" (1878), he declares his unit of measurement changed by the demands of experience; but the context shows that this change does not affect his taste,[1] that from the point of view of art this play is still to him only tolerable. It was his method, however — a method in accordance with his requirements for criticism and with his belief that the public were influential in determining the standard of the stage — to study the reason for the success of plays which made no appeal to him. He writes of "Uriel Acosta" and "Narziss," which were to him the *bêtes noires* of German dramatic literature:[2]

". . . nichtsdestoweniger söhn' ich mich, ohne meine Bedenken aufzugeben, mit beiden Stücken aus, je häufiger ich sie sehe. Ich finde mehr und mehr den Grund, warum sie wirken, wirken müssen, und tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner. Objectiv haben sie gar keine Berechtigung."

In the light of these considerations, it is not surprising that Fontane does not bar the farce from the Royal Stage, but is satisfied with hedging it about with conditions. Similarly, although he recognizes Moser's emptiness,[3] he gives him the honor of founding a new German type, the amusement play.[4]

[1] W, 2, VIII, 166 f.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 170.

[3] *V. Z.* Jan. 3, 1877, B 3.

[4] *V. Z.* Dec. 1, 1883. — Reference to p. 14–15, n. 1 shows that Moser's hold on the Royal Stage was strong during Fontane's activity as reporter. Fontane mentions him (*V. Z.* Mar. 1, 1882, B 1) with Bauernfeld, Birch-Pfeiffer, and Benedix as having become the "eiserner Bestand, ein Lustspiel-Grundkapital unserer Bühne." His criticism re-

The demand of the time accounts also for the fact that Fontane's general practical suggestions to writers — the only ones to be considered in this chapter — are almost entirely to writers of comedy and farce. The new national type, for which he saw immediate need, was a type to combat the influence and popularity of the French society play. He felt keenly the lack of the German stage in light but not trivial comedy with a distinctly national flavor in its tone and trend of thought (Gesinnung), and with a refreshing element of genuine humor. He recognized in Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Grillparzer, and Otto Ludwig a tragedy that was national in spirit and that met in many respects the sternest artistic requirements; but German comedy was deficient. Even "Minna von Barnhelm" seemed to him in spite of its charm, too much a mirror of a certain period[1] to make a strong appeal to the audience of his day. "Der zerbrochene Krug" did not contain the element of sound, wholesome humor indispensable to his idea of successful stage comedy; despite his appreciation of the art represented in its construction, he found a repellent factor in Judge Adam and the comic element dependent upon his connection with the fate of the lovers, and he accordingly recommended this play for reading rather than for presentation.[2]

His voice is heard, therefore, in the sterile period of the 70's and 80's now in a note of commendation so to speak, now in a call to arms. His encouragement takes various forms. He recognizes the value of wit and happy ideas in plays of the day (1876– no playwrights are named) as a welcome substitute for the prosaic, the insipid, and the sentimental in the Birch-Pfeiffer plays.[3] He calls attention (1880) to the difficulties confronting the modern prose writer of comedy and farce; a successful scene in either is, he says,

veals also, however, that the success of these playwrights was due in part to the fact that they offered roles in which Frau Frieb and Herr Döring, both public favorites, excelled.

[1] W, 2, VIII, 33 (1870).

[2] *V. Z.* Oct. 29, 1886, Abendausgabe.

[3] *V. Z.* Feb. 24, B 3.

a greater service and a harder task than the production of a mediocre tragedy in five-foot iambics, for which some Roman emperor provides, ready for use, as it seems, the celebrated main requisites of guilt and atonement.[1] He notes the significant change (1885) of fusion of *life* into the characters. In 1876 he had written:[2] "Die Anfechtbarkeit in Stoff und Gestalten bleibt dieselbe." He now writes:[3]

"Auch in unsern modernen Lustspielen stimmt nicht alles, und wir müssen uns Verzerrungen und Willkürlichkeiten in Hülle und Fülle gefallen lassen; im ganzen aber sind es doch Menschen, deren Bekanntschaft wir machen, Menschen in menschenmöglichen Situationen und vor allem Menschen, die sich nicht eigens vornehmen, um vieles dümmer, trivialer und alberner zu sprechen, als im wirklichen Leben gesprochen wird."

This same measuring norm is applied even more frequently in criticisms not limited to general statements. It is evident, for example, in Fontane's change of attitude toward both von Moser and Lubliner. He notes in von Moser (1871) talent and great charm of spirit (Liebenswürdigkeit). On this ground he places him in what he terms at this time a new school of comedy, represented chiefly by Benedix, von Putlitz, Girndt, and Wilbrandt. A month later he appreciates in his work clearness — in spite of kaleidoscopic changes in scene — a good sense of construction, comedy of situation, and witty dialog. But (1878) he assumes that "Mädchenschwüre," announced as adapted from the Polish, is by von Moser, because it reveals all of his virtuosity and at the same time all of his shortcomings.[4]

"Nichts ist neu, alles ist verzerrt; von Lebenswahrheit keine Spur. . . . Eben so wenig von folgerichtiger Entwickelung. Alles Willkür; nie Verlegenheit was zu tun, weil *alle* Mittel gelten. Die Scene, der Moment herrschen souverän."

His attitude toward Lubliner is for a decade adverse in the extreme. He calls his "Modelle des Sheridan" (1875)

[1] W, 2, VIII, 215. [2] Cf. above, p. 61 n. 3.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 158.
[4] *V. Z.* Dec. 1, 1871, B 2; Jan. 3, 1872, B 2; Nov. 1, 1878, B 4.

a salad of big words.[1] Later (1876) a series of criticisms begins, in which Fontane shows that he has no respect for Lubliner's attitude toward art, since he is willing to sacrifice for the sake of mere effect everything that makes for dramatic unity and reality. He terms him a specialist in the brilliant stringing together of scenes. Material is a matter of indifference to him and he works with puppets.[2] He charges him (1878) with playing in "Gabriele" entirely to the public; (1881–1883) with having in "Gold und Eisen" and "Aus einer Grossstadt" no conception of a play as a whole.[3] But (1879) after the première of "Die Frau ohne Geist," he wrote that Lubliner had created real people in the principal characters of this play, surrounded as they were by traces of his old weaknesses, — arbitrariness, sentimentality, and unnaturalness.[4] He maintains this stand (1885), mentioning it as one of a group of recent plays indicating the grasp upon life that marks the progress of the period over the 40's and 50's.[5]

Although this is naturally not Fontane's only norm, it is worthy of note that this norm has some part — and that not insignificant — in his commendation of more widely recognized playwrights, some of whose works find a place in the stage repertoire today. He gives both Laube and Benedix high rank (1881) among play-makers of the period 1835–1865 for knowledge of life and the theater, for freedom from the bombastic phrase, and from that imitation of Shakspere's imagery which Philistines call poetic. Laube, whom he had charged with failure (1871) in the conception of Gellert's character, he praises for cleverness, concentration, judgment, and justice in the portrayal of Duke Carl Eugene and the Duchess of Hohenheim in "Die Karlsschüler,"[6] and Queen

[1] W, 2, VIII, 273.
[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 11, B 3. (report on Hermann Kette's "Carolina Brocchi").
[3] W, 2, VIII, 277 ff., 282 f.
[4] *V. Z.* Mar. 22, B 1.
[5] W, 2, VIII, 159.
[6] W, 2, VIII, 132–134 f.; *V. Z.* Feb. 22, 1881.

Elizabeth in "Graf Essex" he finds superior to Schiller's conception in that it is truer to life and to history.[1]

The series of predominantly sympathetic reports on Lindau's plays (1872–1888) show commendation in general for piquancy, witty repartee, and new situations. But they show also the application of norms related to the constant one, the lifelike. He considers the premises in "Maria und Magdalena" questionable (1872), but granting these, he sees in the subsequent structure the distinct stamp of truth.[2] "Diana" (1873) fails from lack of natural development.[3] In "Verschämte Arbeit" (1880), a play which he approves for lifelike situations [4] and for the combination of comic content and healthy social import,[5] he finds the working out of the dénouement improbable.[6] Lindau fails, in his opinion (1888), in making "Tante Therese" an entirely sympathetic and convincing character, but shows in this play a sense of unity lacking in his contemporaries in the same line of work.[7]

The patriotic note enters strongly into the criticism of Wilbrandt and without connection with the portrayal of historic character, since it is Wilbrandt's comedy only which meets Fontane's approval.[8] In connection with "Die Maler"

[1] Fontane writes of Frl. Stolberg's presentation of Elizabeth (*V. Z.* May 15, 1873, B 2): "Sie gab die Königin, die aus eifersüchtiger Frauen-Regung zwar die *letzten Entscheidungen* hernimmt, aber doch immer Königin bleibt. Nach dieser Seite hin ist die Elisabeth in 'Essex' *echter, eindringlicher, dramatischer* als die Schiller'sche, in der wir nur die kleingeartete, neidisch Eifersüchtige sehen."

[2] *V. Z.* Dec. 3, B 2.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 236.

[4] *V. Z.* May 5, 1881, B 1.

[5] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 215 (Nov. 1880).

[6] *V. Z.* Oct. 26, B 2.

[8] *V. Z.* Jan. 27. — Other sympathetic reports on Lindau are found: *V. Z.* May 23, 1874, B 2; W, 2, VIII, 238 f.; *V. Z.* Feb. 10, 1878, B 3.

[3] The only Wilbrandt play based on German history that he criticizes, "Der Graf von Hammerstein," he approaches from the histrionic standpoint as presenting in the main character a role that cannot maintain itself without pathos (*V. Z.* Aug. 25, 1874, B 2). He writes of "Kriemhild" (*D* — Jan. 6, 1882): ". . . alles vortrefflich, brilliant componiert, geistvoll im Dialog, reich an guten und wirkungsvollen Scenen, aber doch todt und beinah langweilig, namentlich der 2. Akt; der 3. Akt

(1882) he writes that although the succession of artist anecdotes is somewhat monotonous, a comedy by Wilbrandt is always a pleasure — whether it be old or new, in one act or three — on account of its refreshing, delicate humor. The report on "Jugendliebe" (1871) is in a sense a patriotic call to German playwrights. Fontane defines here, too, the term "Liebenswürdigkeit" used in his treatment of modern French comedy and applied to Putlitz, Girndt, and Benedix. After a résumé of content he writes:[1]

"Das ist nun alles, auf den ersten Blick, so trivial, wie möglich und jeder, dem man den Inhalt nicht vorspielt, sondern blos erzählt, hat ein volles Recht auszurufen: 'Hundertmal dagewesen; lahmgelegte moderne Erfindungskraft!' Und doch wäre nichts falscher als eine solche Verurteilung. Erfindung hin, Erfindung her, jedenfalls begegnen wir hier einem Etwas, das das Gegenteil von aller Lahmheit ist. Alles ist elastisch. Goethe sagt einmal, was frisch ist, ist auch neu, und diesem Ausspruche nach, den ich mir ganz zu eigen mache, haben wir hier nichts Altes, Abgestandenes, sondern etwas blitzblank Neues. Mit dieser Frische im innigsten Zusammenhang steht, oder vielleicht nur ein anderes Wort für sie ist, die Liebenswürdigkeit dieser Wilbrandtschen Arbeiten. Und dies ist unendlich viel. Im Leben wie in der Kunst ist diese Seite des Daseins viel spärlicher vertreten, als eine optimistiche Anschauung auf den ersten Blick vermuten möchte. Liebenswürdig sein umschliesst viel andere Gaben: Gesundheit des Fühlens und Denkens, geistige Beweglichkeit, Güte, nichts schwer nehmen, lachende Augen. All das spiegelt sich in den Lustspielen Adolf Wilbrandts, in keinem mehr als in dieser 'Jugendliebe'. . . . Das ganze aufgebaut auf deutschem Gefühlsleben und deutschem Humor, und in dieser Beziehung spezifisch national. Wir sollten es wirklich mal mit uns selbst versuchen. An den Kräften dazu fehlt es nicht. Wir nennen nur vier Namen, die uns gerade zur Hand sind: Benedix, Putlitz, O. Girndt, Wilbrandt. Sollte es uns nicht beschieden sein, uns zu uns selbst zurückzufinden?"

It was Fontane's conviction that the genuine art of a nation not only should bear but must bear a national impress.

(au fond vielleicht noch schlimmer) macht wenigstens so viel äusserlichen Lärm, dass man zu keiner Langeweile kommen kann."

[1] W, 2, VIII, 229 f. Part of this citation is found only *V. Z.* Apr. 2, B 4.

This is the intangible something that makes its very essence and that at the same time renders successful imitation impossible. He says in "Die Londoner Theater" that the bastard in "King John" is so thoroughly English that only an Englishman can portray the role perfectly.[1]

"Nur in England gedeiht diese Mischung von Mut, Unverschämtheit und breitestem Behagen, ein Mut, der alle Kennzeichen der Renommage trägt, aber doch keine Renommage ist, sondern einsteht für die Situation, die er geschaffen."

In regard to the flaws in Scribe's "Bataille de dames" and the inability of German actors to reproduce the full charm of this play, he writes:[2]

"Allein diese Mängel sind französische Mängel, über die eine französische Aufführung hinweghilft. Sie mindern sich unter der Raschheit des Spiels, unter der Eleganz der Erscheinung, unter der Lebenswahrheit aller Formen. . . . Jedes Volk hat nationale oder gesellschaftliche Typen ausgebildet, deren vollkommene Darstellung nur ihm gelingt. Nicht bloss auf der Bühne; überhaupt in der Kunst."

The strongest of Fontane's patriotic appeals to German play-makers is in his criticism of Benedix. For him the prevailing virtue of Benedix — an amusing and sympathetic treatment of human foibles as they occur commonly in the middle-class townsfolk of Germany — retains distinct value in spite of the accompanying lack of individualization of character. He points to Benedix, therefore, (1874) as to a pathfinder, the intrinsic national worth of whose work is overlooked.[3]

"Er hat nicht nur wie kein anderer, den deutschen Ton getroffen, er hat uns auch eben dadurch, *dass* er diesen Ton und mit ihm zugleich unser Herz traf, den Beweis geführt, dass ein vom Französischen losgelöstes, ehebruchsloses Lustspiel sehr wohl möglich ist. Und so hat er denn geradezu eine nationale Bedeutung für uns, die

[1] W, 2, VIII, 510.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 111 f.
[3] He wrote this after seeing "Gegenüber." *V. Z.* Jan. 25, B 4.

über seine eigenen Tage hinaus fortwirken muss, indem es möglich sein wird, allezeit mit dem Bemerken auf ihn hinzuweisen: *das* war der Weg. All das wusste er — jeder weiss am Ende, was er werth ist — und eine leise Verstimmung musste ihn überkommen, wenn er auf den Lebensgang Scribe's und des älteren Dumas hinsah. Mancher wird hier lächelnd antworten: er war eben weder der eine noch der andere. Allerdings nicht, aber er war *Benedix*, und hat als solcher das deutsche Leben eben so characteristisch wiedergegeben, wie jene das französische. Wer will behaupten, dass Ludwig Richter hinter Gustav Doré zurückstehe? Aber wir stecken noch viel zu tief in der Anschauung: weil es anders ist, darum ist es schlechter. . . ."

He recognizes a trace of realism (1875) in the task which Benedix and von Putlitz set for themselves, and accordingly recommends them rather than Scribe, as models for the Germans asserting, moreover, that unrestrained portrayal of the ordinary daily life about us is much more difficult than the dramatization of memoirs of the Louis and the English Georges.[1] This recognition of the realistic tendency recurs (1878) in the criticism of "Der Störenfried," a report worthy of notice for three additional reasons: it shows Fontane by no means unconscious of Benedix' weaknesses; it mentions as weaknesses qualities which Fontane despised; it attests in this and in its remarks on French comedy the justice of Fontane's critical work:[2]

[1] W, 2, VIII, 161.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 138. — Fontane had written (1874) in support of the privilege of hearing the French players in Berlin (*V Z.* Jan. 3, B 2): "Von einigen Seiten her ist das Auftreten einer französischen Schauspielergesellschaft in Berlin gemissbilligt . . . worden. . . . Wollten wir warten, bis die Franzosen ihre innerliche Stellung zu uns änderten, uns als ebenbürtig oder wohl gar als überlegen ansähen, so würden wir lange warten müssen. Sie werden sich *nicht ändern*, dafür sind sie eben Franzosen, . . . eine liebenswürdige, eminent interessante, mit allen möglichen Vorzügen, aber auch mit allen möglichen Schwächen ausgerüstete Nation. Zu diesen letztern gehört, weltbekanntermassen, dass sie sehr eitel sind und sich, nach wie vor, für die ersten halten. Lassen wir ihnen das; wir sind in der glücklichem Lage es zu können. Es zu können, weil wir Ruhe und Besonnenheit genug haben, *wirkliche* Vorzüge gelten zu lassen, und eingebildete oder *gleichgültige*, zu denen doch zuletzt alle diese 'Comedies' und ihre Vorstellungen gehören, zu belächeln."

". . . das Stück selbst. Wie wohltuend! was ihm von Alltäglichkeit und Sentimentalität anhaftet, verschwindet neben der Fülle seiner Vorzüge. Zwei, drei Winter lang sehe ich nun französische Komödien und freue mich, von wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen, ihrer Kunst, will sagen: ihres Aufbaus, ihrer geschickten Schürzungen und Lösungen, ihrer wundervollen Detailbehandlung, ihres pointierten Dialogs. Aber unter allen diesen Stücken ist keines, in dem so viel gesundes Leben steckte wie in diesem 'Störenfried.' Alle haben sie etwas mehr oder weniger Gekünsteltes, Gezwungenes, während mir der Wert eines Kunstwerks umgekehrt in seiner Ungezwungenheit zu liegen scheint."

Fontane's dislike for the French influence in German comedy and his plea for the strengthening of the national influence were clearly not based upon hatred or lack of appreciation of the French. Eloquently as the "Wanderungen" and the ballads bear witness to his loyalty to his own country, to his fondness for its makers and its traditions, this loyalty is accompanied by distinct pride in his French descent. In his foreign travels he shows extreme sensitiveness to indications of German inferiority, especially if he must admit them just.[1] His spirit was in some respects typically German;

[1] He wrote to his wife from Milan (*L* — Aug. 10, 1875): "Ueberhaupt welche Stadt! O Berlin, wie weit ab bist du von einer *wirklichen* Hauptstadt des deutschen Reiches! Du bist durch politische Verhältnisse über Nacht dazu geworden, aber *nicht durch Dich selbst.* Wirst es, nach *dieser* Seite hin, auch noch lange nicht werden. Vielleicht fehlen die Mittel, gewiss die Gesinnung. 'Denn aus Gemeinem ist der Mensch gemacht' sagt Schiller; er soll dabei speciell an den Berliner Spiessbürger, der inzwischen zum 'Bourgeois' sich abwärts entwickelt hat, gedacht haben. Ueberhaupt will es mir nicht glücken, es im Auslande zu irgend einer patriotischen Erhebung zu bringen. Nicht nur, dass man Schritt um Schritt empfindet, wie sehr uns diese alten und reichen Kulturlande voraus sind, nein, man *taxirt uns auch in diesem Sinne.* Man will von uns nichts wissen. Weder das 'ewige Gesiege', noch die 5 Milliarden haben unsere Situation gebessert. Es hiess zwar unmittelbar nach dem Kriege; 'wir seien nun ein für allemal etablirt, der so lange vermisste Respekt sei da.' Aber ich merke nichts davon. Alles dreht sich nach wie vor um England und Frankreich; man versteht kein Deutsch oder man will es nicht verstehen; englische und französische Zeitungen überall; englische und französische Bücher im Schaufenster jedes Buchladens, aber kein einziges deutsches Buch. Nicht

French amusements did not appeal to him,[1] and there are repeated evidences that he considered the French disposition and attitude toward life inferior to the German. Yet his connection with the French colony of Berlin was a revered family tradition, and the consciousness of the French blood in his veins gave him a sense not only of pride but of superiority to most men of pure Teutonic ancestry. There is a trace of this in the consciousness of his excellence as *causeur*, which he attributed to his French descent. He writes from the Italian Lakes (1875):[2]

"Wie ungermanisch bin ich doch. Alle Augenblicke (aber ganz im Ernst) empfind' ich meine romanische Abstammung. Und ich bin stolz darauf."

He rejoices in a reference from Brahm (1888) to the effect that Berliners cannot understand Gallic humor, adding that he is both proud and happy that the cradle of his ancestors stood in Languedoc.[3] He values, accordingly, the cleverness, the grace, the charm, a large part of the method of modern French comedy. He deplores the lack of this distinctive French quality in the German comedy of manners. But he prefers the spirit (Gesinnung), the *Liebenswürdigkeit*, that he finds in the work of some German playwrights; the conclusions his diary shows from the visit of the French players (1878) were:

"Es wird mir immer klarer, dass wir die gesamte französische Production (auf literar. Gebiet) überschätzen. Die Mache, das eigentliche Können ist beneidenswert; aber das äusserliche Können ist *nicht* das Höchste. Das Höchste kommt von oben, es ist ein Geschenk der Götter, und man hat es, oder hat es *nicht*. Die Franzosen, in der ungeheuren Mehrzahl ihrer von aller Welt bewunderten Productionen, haben es ganz entschieden *nicht;* in all diesen Stücken und Romanen ist nichts *Bleibendes;* es fehlt der grosse Inhalt."

einmal die 'Wanderungen.' Im Grunde genommen ist es recht so, denn das, was *wirkliche* Superiorität schafft, fehlt uns, trotz Schulen und Kasernen nach wie vor. Freilich haben Athen und Sparta einst politisch rivalisirt; aber Sparta ist längst nur noch Name und Begriff, während die beglücktere Rivalin eine *Wirklichkeit* ist bis diesen Tag."

[1] Cf. W, 2, VI, 68 f. (1856).

[2] *L* — Aug. 9 — To his wife.

[3] W, 2, VII, 189.

Since it was Scribe who was particularly in vogue on the Royal Stage and among the writers honored by it, it is Scribe whom he most often analyzes. He pronounces against Scribe's "Les doigts de fée" the verdict (1871) of inconsistency, lack of reason, sacrifice of art to effect, and charges Scribe with attempting to gain popularity by feeling the pulse of the masses. He finds the portrayal of character in "Le verre d'eau" inadequate (1874). He says (1876) that the author's ingenuity (Genialität) cannot make up for improbability and meager motivation in "Bataille de dames," as an example of the latter fault mentioning the return of Flavigneul at the end — immediately after his supposed rescue — for no other reason than that the betrothal was yet to be consummated. He charges Scribe with making extraneous additions (Einlagen) to his material in all his comedies in order to keep up the lure of effect throughout five acts, nor does he exclude here "Les contes de la reine de Navarre," although he considers it superior to all the other plays mentioned in that it combines effectiveness with *Liebenswürdigkeit*, a quality either absent or inconspicuous elsewhere.

Yet he consistently finds French method eminently successful in the production of grace and brilliance, and holds it up as a model in this respect, at times almost as a goad to German playwrights. He praises Scribe's skill in manipulation of details, his effective use of situation, the charm of his dialog (1874). He accuses Scribe's German followers (1875) of copying only the errors and the superfluities, of overlooking the immeasurable charm which separates them from the wit, the grace, and genius of the master.[1]

Fontane attacks individual German writers in some cases also without the balm of requital used throughout his criticism of Benedix and Putlitz. Wichert's only claim to success rests upon "Ein Schritt vom Wege," which he approves (1872) as a racy variation of an old theme for cleverness and piquancy in dialog. He finds "Die Realisten" unrealistic

[1] The references to Scribe cited above are: W, 2, VIII, 112 ff. (1871); *V. Z.* Jan. 20, 1874, B 2; Nov. 7, 1876, B 3; Dec. 19, 1876, B 3; — W, 2, VIII, 161 (1875).

(1874) and says in connection with "Der Freund des Fürsten" (1879) that the conditions of real life are long since banished from our stage. Wildenbruch he hounds (1882–1887) for disregard of truth, for violence and arbitrariness in the handling of plot and character. (1886) He pronounces the weakness of Philippi's "Daniela" characteristic of nine-tenths of modern plays in that it emphasizes false sentiments and emotions and conjures up conflicts accompanied by pathos and passion which a balanced human understanding cannot accept.[1]

It is as a whole, then, a simple unified message that Fontane has for the play-makers of his day. There are but few motifs, numerous as are the variations based upon them: to be independent and national, ready to learn from foreign types and to adapt them, but never to imitate; to be dissatisfied with offering mere entertainment, to disregard popularity and gain, to shun the strife for novelty as an attraction; to cultivate artistic earnestness, to recognize the importance of sacrificing striking scenes to the unity and completeness of the whole; to serve truth and not effect, to realize the demand of the age for life in the drama.

He expresses clearly two ideals for playwrights; one not far from the beginning, the other very near the close of his long activity as theater-critic. It is significant that both contain the note that only *life* will fill the need of the stage. The first has to do with one of the most unreal of Iffland's characters, the Gambler. Fontane does not say that the role is impossible, but that it depends for its appeal entirely upon the conviction of the actor in regard to it.[2]

"Es lässt sich erkennen, dass das Stück von einem *Schauspieler* geschrieben wurde. *Dichterisch* genommen, liegt darin ein Mangel; ein Stück soll so geschrieben sein, dass die Gestalten als solche leben können und zwar unter *allen Umständen*, . . . unabhängig von der grösseren oder geringeren Kraft ihrer Darsteller."

[1] Cf.: (Wichert) *V. Z.* Nov. 1, 1872, B 2; W, 2, VIII, 211 ff. (1874–79); (Wildenbruch) W, 2, VIII, 249–265; (Philippi) W, 2, VIII, 293 f.

[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 8, 1874, B 4.

The second is a part of that whole-souled tribute of praise that he paid to Wildenbruch eventually (1888) for "Die Quitzows":[1]

"Das ist ein Stück, wie's sein soll, ein Stück ausserhalb der Schablone, vielmehr umgekehrt von Anfang bis Ende in seinen eigenen Stiefeln stehend. Von Schuhen lässt sich hier nicht sprechen. Es ist ein Ding für sich. Alles andere, was ich von Wildenbruch kenne, wird über kurz oder lang weggefegt sein, dies aber wird bleiben, denn es ist in seinem Kerne voll Wahrheit und Leben, zugleich auf seine Tendenz hin angesehn voll erhebender Schönheit. Ein *deutsches* Stück, das als solches weit über die Territorien zwischen Havel and Spree hinaus seinen Siegeszug machen und alle particularistische Gefühle . . . siegreich überwinden wird. Denn neben vielem andern ist es auch eminent ein *Spiel*stück."

The suggestions from which directors might profit show again constantly the application of the realistic norm and reveal more than any other part of Fontane's dramatic criticism the unity of purpose that characterizes it.

The idea of truth is not coincident here with the idea of life, as it is not coincident in reality, but it is so closely related to it that complete separation is impossible. The sense that later made Fontane demand realism is active even in the articles from the 50's on the London stage. A difference in terms at times gives the impression of a different attitude. He is in the earlier period a degree more firmly bound by reverence for history, perhaps, than later, and he expresses approval and disapproval oftener by the words 'accuracy,' 'inaccuracy,' and 'truth' than by reference to the presence or absence of the lifelike.

There is in this section, as in that devoted particularly to writers, the double appeal: to national pride, by pointing to marks of superiority in the presentation of Shakspere in London at the time of his residence there; and to personal responsibility, which should reveal itself first of all in the choice of plays. The idea appears again in this connection that one function of the stage is to provide amusement;

[1] The greater part of this quotation is found: W, 2, VIII, 265 f.; the last part is from *V. Z.* Nov. 10, No. 533.

but the hold of the amusement play was already so strong that there was no necessity for making an appeal for it to the directors. Any word in its favor has on the contrary a condition attached: (1871) that it should not displace the ideal; (1881) that the element which provides entertainment should involve no use of false means, such as arbitrary adjustment in structure and motivation.[1]

The obligation of a prominent royal stage to give encouragement to contemporary literary production is conceded,[2] but as in the case of the amusement play there was no occasion for enlisting the sympathy of the director. The new and the purely amusing were unfortunately too often coincident. Suggestions as to repertoire occur usually, therefore, only in appreciation of a striking success or of a mere attempt to renew a drama of literary value or one of interest in historical development. He writes (1874), for example, that the Royal Stage reaches its normal level with the presentation of "Kabale und Liebe" and "Twelfth Night," [3] since they represent the union of literary worth and real histrionic success. Similarly, it is Goethe's "Palaeophron und Neoterpe" that gives artistic satisfaction as a Sylvester play (1878) rather than most of the new productions that it was customary to present on New Year's Eve. Fontane writes of it:[4]

"Neuer als das Neueste ist das Aelteste. . . . In der That besitzt es alle Zauber dessen, der es schuf: Empfindung, Lebensweisheit, Lieblichkeit und Klarheit des Ausdrucks, ächte Freiheit und ächte Loyalität . . . ganz eigenartig, ganz originell gegriffen. . . . Der letzte Tag im Jahr, wo sich Schwindendes und Kommendes die Hand reichen, ist so recht eigentlich der Schauplatz für 'Palaeophron und Neoterpe.' Wollen diese doch nichts andres sein, als Verkörperungen des Alten und Neuen."

He prophesies that Massinger's "Duke of Milan" will not hold a place on the Royal Stage. He says that Massinger speaks to a changed taste and on this account does not meet the demands of the time; but he expresses gratitude for the

[1] W, 2, VIII, 71, 120 f.
[2] *V. Z.* Nov. 6, 1879, B 1.
[3] *V. Z.* May 14, B 2.
[4] *V. Z.* Jan. 3, B 2.

interesting attempt to balance the ebb in contemporary production by such a revival.[1] He enjoys a critic's feast, as a rule, when the program of the day offers anything from Shakspere, Lessing, Goethe, Kleist, or Grillparzer.[2] He makes no attempt, however, independent of repertoire, to lift a dramatist upon his shield. He may have felt that his position as reporter offered no opportunity for this, but such an attitude seems hardly in keeping with the fact that he is fearless in attacking weakness in the plays presented. That he did not use whatever influence he had in stronger support of such dramatists as Hebbel and Grillparzer, who had not come into their own on the Royal Stage,[3] is noticeable. He says naively on the occasion of the first performance of "Herodes und Mariamne," which to him was beautiful but abnormal, not humanly convincing in its dramatic conflict, that it is not only the privilege (Recht) but the duty of the Royal Stage to present this play to the public, if for no other reason than to increase their appreciation of their older standard dramas.[4]

Fontane's position is frequently that the directors themselves do not appreciate either the needs of the stage or the material at hand to meet these needs, and in this connection the note of challenge is often heard. His plea in the essay on the London theaters for extending the Shakspere repertoire of the German stage rests not only upon his love of Shakspere but upon his desire to supply the lack of the German drama in plays combining sound humor with poetic power. "Twelfth Night," in which this union is found, is, he says, not widely known on the German stage. His discussion of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is practically a plea that it be given in Germany. He commends the English for producing and taking pleasure in "Two Gentlemen of

[1] *V. Z.* Nov. 25, 1879, B 2.

[2] He shows less enthusiasm for Schiller because of the inability of the actors to interpret romantic characters and to appreciate the romantic element.

[3] Cf. above, p. 14–15, n. 1.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 155.

Verona" while Germany engages in strife as to its authenticity. He reminds his countrymen that Speed and Launce were in the period of the Kembles and Keans regarded as painsworthy roles, that the combination of humor in these roles and of poetry in that of Julia gives the play precedence over "The Tempest" in adaptability to the modern stage.[1]

But the difficulties involved in staging "The Tempest" did not bar it, in Fontane's opinion, from presentation in Germany. Before he knew of Dingelstedt's attempt to give this play in Munich, he urged that its problems were not insurmountable;[2] that the love-scenes between Ferdinand and Miranda were a gay counterpart to those of Romeo and Juliet; that the role of Caliban contained a sort of humor in the rough characteristic of the age of Shakspere and Luther, that this monster was a wholesome conception, of which Germany showed no appreciation and which certainly no German poet could produce.

The suggestions concerning the reconstruction of plays for staging, based also largely upon observations made in London, are a further attempt to arouse German directors to interest and to activity. The report on "Coriolanus" is in the main a vindication of the fact that the twenty-eight original scenes had been reduced to thirteen in the Sadler's Wells Theater in London without violence to the drama.[3] In the Hamlet of this stage, on the other hand, he objects to the omission of the scene (Act III) in which Hamlet contemplates the murder of the king at prayer, on the ground that it involves a loss in dramatic terror and takes an important touch from the character portrayal of the prince.[4]

[1] W, 2, VIII, 489, 555–557 f.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 547 ff. — Fontane makes a subsequent addition here to the effect that seeing the Dingelstedt play has dispelled most of his original doubts and strengthened his recommendation. This addition was published first in "Aus England" (1860). Fontane probably saw a performance of Dingelstedt's version in Munich, March, 1859, when he had an audience with King Maximilian II of Bavaria. (Cf. above, p. 41.)

[3] W, 2, VIII, 559 ff.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 535 ff.

Yet he considers this preferable to the false emphasis given in Berlin to Hamlet's rescue and sudden return from the mission to England, which sacrifices clearness and correct proportion to momentary effect.

The same principles of stage adaptation are obviously at work in Fontane's comparison (1873) of the Oechelhäuser and the Dingelstedt version of "Henry VI." The first of these attempts to condense the fifty-two scenes of Parts II and III into one play of seventeen scenes. The second, which Fontane prefers, discards Part I, keeping II and III as separate plays. He agrees with Oechelhäuser that real dramatic unity is lacking in the original and practically impossible if the entire material be included. His fondness for history is apparent in the appreciation he expresses for the "consistent series of interesting historical events as a means of developing interesting characters." His sense of dramatic effect, however, leads him to condemn the whole in spite of his admiration for such valuable details as the colossal figure of Queen Margaret, the lifelike folk scenes, the contrast between Margaret and the weak king; for Oechelhäuser's extreme condensation results in his opinion in the confusion of the spectator through an unnatural massing of events that are impressive only when independent of each other;[1] he even suggests that the fall of the Duke of Gloucester (developed in Shakspere in the first three acts

[1] This adaptation by Wilhelm Oechelhäuser was not obtainable in the Royal Library of Berlin. Oechelhäuser's edition of Shakspere's drama ("W. Shakespeares dramatische Werke," übersetzt von August Wilhelm von Schlegel und Ludwig Tieck. — Im Auftrag der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft herausgegeben und mit Einleitungen versehen von Wilhelm Oechelhäuser. — Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Berlin, Wien) contains only the unabbreviated translation of the three parts of "Henry VI." Oechelhäuser's method in the condensed version for the stage can be only inferred from Fontane's criticism; the general outlines are at least indicated clearly from Act III on. — For Fontane's criticism of this version of "Henry VI" cf. *V. Z.* May 30, B 2.

The Dingelstedt version, to which Fontane merely refers, comprises the first two of the three plays included in "Die weisse Rose" (2. Hälfte des Historien-Cyclus von Shakespeare, für die deutsche Bühne frei bear-

of Part II) is material for one drama; that the humiliation and subsequent triumph of the House of York (in Shakspere, Acts III and IV, Part II, closing with the victory of St. Albans) would fill the space of a second; that the strife of the sons of York among themselves and the declaration of a political program — so to speak — by Richard of York (the content of Part III in Shakspere) offer material for a third play or for the prolog to such a play at least.

Fontane's approval — for esthetic reasons — (1875) of the liberties which the Genée version takes with the text of "Die Hermannsschlacht" may be regarded as typical of his general attitude toward the question of adaptation for the stage. He shows in his criticism of this drama an admiration for Kleist comparable to that for Shakspere, yet he writes of Genée's changes in the conditions attending the death of Varus and Ventidius:[1]

"Varus, statt zu einem blossen Objekt für das Langmesser seiner Feinde herabgedrückt zu werden, gibt sich selbst den Tod. Ventidius wird unverändert in den Bärengarten gesperrt, aber glücklicherweise *hinter* der Scene, so dass wir uns mit einem Bericht des Grässlichen, das sich vollzog, begnügen müssen. Fachleute, die so leicht in Gefahr kommen das Charaktervolle über das Schönheitsvolle, die geniale Curiosität über das Aesthetisch-zulässige zu setzen, werden diese Aenderungen vielleicht missbilligen und erklären ihren Kleist lieber Echt 'mit Haut und Haar,' als in dieser mehr sauberen Zurechtmachung geniessen zu wollen."

Finally, in spite of his reverence for Shakspere, he does not join the ranks of those who look with disfavor on the liberties which Dingelstedt takes with the original in his

beitet. Franz Dingelstedt's Sämmtliche Werke, Band 12, Berlin, 1877). Dingelstedt's Part I is an adaptation of the content of Shakspere's Part II; his Part II, an adaptation of Shakspere's Part III.

[1] For the quotation cf. *V. Z.* Jan. 21, B 2; a large part of this report is given also: W, 2, VIII, 92 f. — According to Kleist's conception, Thusnelda herself conducts Ventidius to the garden and taunts him as the bear attacks him (Heinrich von Kleist, "Sämtliche Werke," hrsg. v. Arthur Eloesser, Leipzig, Tempel-Verlag, 1909–1910; Act V, Sc. 17, 18); Varus escapes the hand of Hermann to become the victim of Fust, prince of the Cimbrians (Act V, Sc. 22).

stage version of "Winter's Tale"; on the contrary, upon the absence of any unpleasant sensation he bases the judgment (1886) that the peculiar demands of the dramatized romance (Märchen) justify such changes.[1]

"Es ist, was übrigens seinem Märchen-charakter entspricht, ein Ausstattungsstück, vielleicht immer gewesen, jedenfalls geworden, und so heisst es denn dem Dichter und seiner Dichtung nicht zu nahe treten, wenn wir den Erfolg des gestrigen Abends in zweiter Reihe wenigstens den mannigfachen Kräften und Hilfen zuschreiben, die sich, neben den darstellenden Künstlern, in den Dienst des Stücks stellen: Musik, Tanz, Dekoration, Inszenirung. Auch Bearbeitung wäre hier zu nennen. Dingelstedt ist zwar mit einer wahren Riesenscheere vorgegangen, hat den Vorwurf einer gewissen Impietät hinnehmen müssen, auch soll in der That nicht geleugnet werden, dass einzelne Scenen auf blosse Ballethöhe herabgedrückt worden sind, aber die *grosse Wirkung gerade dieser* lebenden Bilder scheint ihm und seinem Verfahren doch Recht zu geben. Es giebt so vieles in der Kunst, und zumal im Märchen, das jeder breiteren Ausführung, ja dem Wort überhaupt widerstreitet und in der Andeutung am kräftigsten zur Geltung kommt."

On the general subject of stage-effect and its production Fontane has practically but one absolute tenet: that if stage properties are used at all, the result must satisfy reason as well as the senses. This he does not formulate anywhere as

[1] *V. Z.* No. 456, Sept. 30, Abendausgabe. — Fontane had written of this drama in the essay on the London theaters (W, 2, VIII, 524 f.): "Dies Stück, wie es im Prinzess-Theater gegeben wird, befriedigt nicht. Es ist nicht leicht, sich über das 'Warum' klar zu werden. Ich glaube, es liegt allerdings an der *Aufführung*, aber es liegt auch am *Stück*. Dinge, die bei der Lektüre nicht stören, können bei der Darstellung unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten bieten. Das Wickelkind . . . *tritt zu sehr in die Erscheinung*, um anders als komisch zu wirken. . . . Die ersten drei Akte haben nur *eine Oase*, das ist die grosse Gerichtsscene, wo der Ausspruch des delphischen Orakels die Unschuld Hermionens verkündet." Fontane did not here, as in the case of "Antony and Cleopatra," advise that this be introduced upon the home stage. — The Dingelstedt version (Ein Wintermärchen — Schauspiel in 4 Aufzügen von Shakspere, für die deutsche Bühne neu übersetzt und bearbeitet von Franz Dingelstedt — Berlin, 1859) condenses the first three acts greatly.

a tenet, but it may easily be deduced. He follows the acknowledgment of scenic improvement in "Henry IV" (Part II) with the statement (1873) that a cardinal mistake of all stage appointments, as of the whole modern drama (Schauspiel), is that it is calculated to appeal to sense rather than to the understanding.[1] He says in the report on "Henry VIII" ("Londoner Theater") that he has no objection to Shakspere in a barn, where the spectator has only the words of the poet and his own imagination, but that too great care cannot be used if there is an attempt at reality (handgreifliche Wahrheit).[2]

There is the indication here that Fontane was neutral on the question of return to the simplicity of the Elizabethan stage. He writes, however, of Kean's presentation of "Midsummer Night's Dream" (L. T.):[3]

"Die Wiedereinführung der alten, originalen Shakespeare-Bühne indes, worauf wir bei Aufführung dieses Stückes vielleicht stolzer sind, als nötig wäre, fehlt hier. Die allermodernsten Dekorations- und Maschinenkünste haben helfen müssen und haben, glaube ich, ihre Aufgabe besser als der grüne Kasten mit seiner Treppe rechts und links erfüllt."

The space he devotes to the details of staging and his interest in the innovations of the Meiningen players prove further that he was not a believer in primitive stage conditions.

It was clearly his belief, however, that the genre in hand must determine the solution of specific stage problems. That the esthetic appeal of an entire performance may be sacrificed by jarring details is evident from the following typical suggestions: (1878) that decoration and costume may be dangerous additions if not made an integral part of a beautiful poetic whole;[4] that costuming and background may be

[1] *V. Z.* Mar. 27, B 2 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 11 ff.).

[2] W, 2, VIII, 514. — References to the "Londoner Theater" will be designated hereafter L. T. and represent chronologically 1857–1859.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 520.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 60 f.; this is one of the criticisms involving the comparison of a play ("Die Räuber") as given at the Royal Theater of Berlin and by the visiting Meiningen players, to the detriment of the former.

decisive elements, especially in poetic drama, for success or failure of a weak scene, a symbolic figure, or a character that is romantic in conception, where the appeal to esthetic sense must be so complete as to prevent the entrance of inquiry to dispel illusion. The man of the cliffs in "Der Traum ein Leben" is in Fontane's opinion (1878) a poetic conception, but the figure may approach dangerously near the ludicrous in presentation.[1] On the other hand, it is possible to mar the effect of burlesque by too great realism in staging.[2]

Even the early Shakspere reports show clearly the distinctions Fontane would make for staging on the basis of the inherent esthetic demand of the drama in question. History, tragedy, and comedy require on the whole different treatment; but within the groups, also, individual variation is necessary, and the basis for decision must be the maintenance of proportion in order to give externalities the real advantage of ornament by preventing them from intruding upon poetic power. Within the history group, for example, "Richard II" and "King John" present to the manager a problem less difficult than that of "Henry VIII."[3] The lyric continuity of the first two plays gives the necessary artistic support for the superinduced burden of material pomp. In the third, less evenly constructed, poetry alternates with spectacle: what passes before the eye here must at times discharge alone the function in which poetry should normally never have *less* than an equal share.

The histories demand in general, from their very nature, more faithful reflection of fact in stage-detail than the other groups of plays. They have less dramatic value and attain their full worth therefore only through accurate revival of what has once been reality. The manager who would stage the chronicles must do more, therefore, than offer to his public a picture which does not violate cultural conditions.[4]

The report on "Henry VIII" as presented by Kean at the Princess Theater in London, with its challenge to German managers, shows perhaps more clearly than any other single

[1] *V. Z.* Dec. 14, B 3.
[2] *V. Z.* Oct. 17, 1887, B.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 529 f. (L. T.).
[4] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 7 (1872), 515 (L. T.).

instance Fontane's idea of the scope of a director's post-creative power and influence. He accompanies this report with an extensive treatment of the program provided for the performance; and practically defies even the court stages of Germany to make a similar statement that no picture, no authority has been left unconsulted in the effort to make a drama a reliable mirror of the period and the characters of which it treats.[1] The later realist speaks here distinctly in praise of truth in historic detail. Referring first to Germany and then to England he says:

"Man hat gewisse Vorschriften, nach denen man verfährt; man kennt die Röcke und Mäntel der Reformationszeit, die Tracht Philipps II. und die Kostüme des Dreizigjährigen Krieges, aber man gibt sich wenig Mühe, den Rock and Mantel der einzelnen Persönlichkeit ausfindig zu machen. In dieser Wahrhaftigkeit waltet aber ein ganz besonderer Zauber, vielleicht um deshalb, weil das Gefühl instinktmässig die interesselose Schablone von der reizvollen Besonderheit zu unterscheiden weiss."

But the commendation which he gives to Kean's method is not to be explained purely on the basis of the charm that he found in the portrayal of things as they were, whether in life — in its broad sense — or in history. He points out the fact that Kean has by insight, study, and scientific thoroughness justified the presentation of a play structurally weak, lacking in spontaneity and in sustained, differentiated characters, — a play so clearly stamped, too, as occasional, that it cannot be compared with the best of the Shakspere histories. What is really dramatic in the material has, in Fontane's opinion, remained a Wolsey sketch. This ends with the third act and all that follows is mere appendage. Kean pursued the only course possible to give value to the last two acts by making them a panorama in which historic accuracy and irresistible poetic power combine for educational and artistic results.

A later report on "Richard III" (1887) shows somewhat less clearly the spirit of challenge, with much more

[1] W, 2, VIII, 510 ff. (L. T.); quotation is from p. 515.

definite emphasis on the realistic in the Kean presentation. Fontane says of the German performance which he has just seen:[1]

"Unlondonhaft waren die Decorationen in der Heuchlerscene mit dem Lordmayor und den Aldermen! Aber all das sind Nebensachen; es ist mit dem äusserlichen Apparat überhaupt nicht zu zwingen, wenn nicht die Hauptsache hinzukommt . . . worauf ich nicht verzichten kann; das sind Menschen, Persönlichkeiten, die wenigstens zur Stellung lebender Bilder ausreichen und nicht als solche schon mich aus aller Illusion reissen."

Over against this Fontane sets again as a model "Henry Eighth" as seen in London:

"*Lange bevor es in Deutschland eine die Aeusserlichkeit betonende Schule gab,* gab es in London ganz nach *dem spätern Meininger Prinzip* arrangierte Shakespeare-Aufführungen, oder Shakespeare-Revivals, wie sie sich nannten, an deren Spitze der als Künstler nicht hervorragende,[2] sonst aber grundgescheidte Charles Kean stand. . . . Alles was sich da vor mir bewegte — mir schwebt ganz speziell noch eine Darstellung von Shakespeares Heinrich VIII. vor, Kean als Kardinal Wolsey — war wie dem Leben entnommen, und der Herzog von Buckingham war ein Herzog von Buckingham und der Herzog von Norfolk war ein Herzog von Norfolk. . . . Und wenn ich nun daneben der beiden Bischöfe gedenke, die vorgestern den heuchlerischen Richard flankirten und vieler andrer, die 'O horrible, most horrible' die Vorstellung von Prinzen und Herren erwecken sollten!"

The realistic is usually subservient, however, to another principle: that of proportion in the parts for the sake of harmonious completeness in the whole. With no surrender of inherent value it becomes, then, nothing more than a necessary factor. This is clear in the London period in the general treatment of the adjustment of stage externals to poetic power in the Shaksperean plays. The idea of the realistic as a minor consideration occurs later in connection with two performances of historic drama separated from each

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 4, No. 461; the criticism of Grube's Richard III — from this report — is given: W, 2, VIII, 395 f.

[2] This refers to his histrionic art; cf. W, 2, VIII, 503.

other by a period of sixteen years. The first falls perhaps more strictly under suggestions to individual actors, but it is certainly not without its message for the director. Fontane writes after the highest commendation, in other respects, of Frl. Lehnbach's Clärchen (1872):[1]

"Die Art, wie Clärchen . . . das Volk an- und aufruft, dürfte vielleicht zu beanstanden sein. Aller unmotivirter Lärm auf der Bühne ist *uns verhasst, aber* es gibt *doch auch Situationen, wo gelärmt werden muss* und wo die Decenz des Spiels zu einem Fehler werden kann. Die Intentionen der Künstlerin erkennen wir sehr wohl. Das Goethe'sche Clärchen ist keine Jeanne d'Arc, die kriegsbegeistert an die Spitze bewaffneter Schaaren tritt; sie ist ein schlichtes Kind, das, in Hörnähe spanischer Wachen, zu eingeschüchterten Bürgern spricht. *Alles gut.* Aber *das Richtige im* Leben ist bekanntlich nicht immer *das Richtige in der Kunst.* Die Griechen, wenn sie ein Bildwerk in bedeutender Höhe aufstellten, bildeten die Statue absichtlich falsch, damit sie, von unten aus gesehen, richtig erscheine. So würde auch in dieser Scene das äusserlich *Unwahrscheinlichere das innerlich Wahrere sein.* Dieser Appell an das Volk erheischt mehr Tonfülle, als Frl. Lehnbach ihm gibt."

The second instance deals by coincidence also with the problem of proportion in stage tumult. Fontane says (1888) that through too accurate realistic portrayal the mob-scenes in "Julius Caesar" lost their proper relation to the central idea; as a consequence the speeches of Brutus and Antony had no sustained force against the noise of the populace.[2]

"Die zu starke Wirkung auf unsere Sinne verschliesst uns den Weg zur Hauptsache, den zur poetischen Erhebung."

In the tragedy of imagination and in tragi-comedy the director is not confronted by the same demand for accuracy in historic detail. The restriction put upon the illusory result remains as before; it must command the service of both truth and naturalness in order that disturbing doubt may not enter the spectator's mind. Truth includes here both faithfulness in interpretation of the author's conception and in the suggestion of cultural and topographical background

[1] *V. Z.* Mar. 10, B 4. [2] W, 2, VIII, 18.

— in so far as necessary to give the natural atmosphere and a consistent background for the plot. The idea of intimate relation between truth and convincing stage-effect occurs in Fontane's objection to Oechelhäuser's directions for the opening scene in "Macbeth." [1]

"Das Ganze soll wie ein Accord im Winde sein, ein Haidespuk' eine Vision, ein Kommen und Gehen. Indemselben Augenblick, in dem man sich der Erscheinung bewusst wird, schwindet sie auch wieder. So die unbedingt gut zu heissende Intention des Bearbeiters. *Aber dies alles wird nicht* durch nächtliche Finsterniss und räumliche Entfernung erreicht, die, während sie die Wirkung steigern sollen, sie nur verschlingen. Unsere Sinne müssen vielmehr einen *vollen und bestimmten*, wenn auch plötzlichen und rasch vorübergehenden Eindruck empfangen; wir müssen diese Hexen *deutlich* sehen und *deutlich* hören. Gespenster die blos in Höhlen und Löchern wohnen, die sich schämen an's Tageslicht zu treten, sind keine mehr. . . . Im Speziellen aber ist dies Erscheinen auf drei Felszacken ganz und gar vom Nebel. Darüber, dass Shakespeare erst eine 'offene Stelle' und weiterhin 'eine Haide' vorschreibt, sowie darüber, dass das Land im vielmeiligen Umkreis von Fores und Inverness flach wie eine Tenne daliegt, über diese beiden nicht unwichtigen Punkte gehen wir hinweg und haben *lediglich die Frage nach der grösseren oder geringeren Bühnenwirksamkeit* im Auge. Da sind wir denn entschieden für eine Haide bei grauem Tag (*nicht* Nacht und Nebel); der Bühnenraum kurz, aber durch eine perspektivische Dekoration vertieft, im Vordergrund ein erratischer Block, wie sie auf diesen Haiden ausgestreut sich vorfinden; und um diesen Block her die *Drei* beim Rendezvous, in manchem Stück jenen 'Drei Furien' verwandt und nachzubilden, die Böcklin's geniale Hand auf einem gleichnamigen Bilde hervorzuzaubern im Stande war."

Fontane objects further to the Oechelhäuser setting for Duncan's reception of the news of Macbeth's victory. The stage direction of Shakspere (Act I, Sc. 2) is "Camp near Forres." Oechelhäuser, arguing that an indoor scene was here more fruitful of illusion than an open landscape, changes this to the interior of Forres Castle. Fontane agrees with the general principle of working for the fullest effect of illusion, but would not apply it here, since the result is less

[1] *V. Z.* Nov. 18, 1875, B 3.

natural and involves an unnecessary return to a background used frequently before.[1]

But in the demand for approximate truth in details of background, the natural, although a significant norm for judgment here, is less prominent than the norm of historic accuracy. Fontane writes that "Macbeth" as staged by Mr. Phelps in London was a revelation not of mere magnificence but of *truth*, or at least of what present knowledge counts as truth. He commends the use of the Norman style of architecture, not only for inherent fitness — since its seriousness and heaviness agree with the general tenor of the tragedy — but also on the basis of possible fact, — since its first use in England, after 1066, falls approximately in the time of Macbeth.[2] Appended to this report are some paragraphs on the scenery he saw used in Germany for "Macbeth" within a month after he wrote his account:

"Darf ich fragen, was sich die Intendantur oder Regie dabei gedacht hat, als sie für das Zeitalter Macbeths den Tudorstil adoptierte und sämtliche Schlösser, Fassaden und Hallen nach dem berühmten Vorbilde der Kapelle Heinrichs VII. baute? Wenn man sich solche Freiheiten erlauben und in der 'Metropole der Intelligenz' aller Bau- und Kulturgeschichte in dieser Weise Hohn sprechen will, warum dann nicht lieber gleich ein Rokoko-Schloss? Ja, ich würde einen solchen Monstrebau mit seinen Schnörkeln und Verschlingungen vorziehen. Bei richtiger Beleuchtung hat der Rokokostil etwas Spukhaftes; es glotzt einen aus den Ecken an, wie wenn Zwerge und Kobolde darin sässen und allerhand Teufelszeug trieben. Ich könnte mir eine Lady Macbeth in solcher Umgebung schon denken, wie denn die Rokoko-Schlösser in der Tat gelegentlich eine Geschichte haben, die an Intrigue und Graus und Mord hinter Nichts zurückbleibt, was uns vom Than von Fife berichtet wird. — Die Berliner Regie kann gegen meine Anklage freilich eine doppelte Verteidigung erheben; sie kann entweder sagen, Macbeth lebte in vorhistorischer Zeit, und wir wissen nichts über den schottischen Schlossbau jener Periode; oder sie darf mit den Fingern knipsen und mich bedeuten, dass das alles Nebensache sei, . . . Ich kann beide Antworten nicht gelten lassen. Macbeth ist kein Sagenkönig. Er regierte um die Mitte des 11. Jahrhunderts. Wir wissen allerdings nicht genau, wie

[1] *Ibid.* [2] W, 2, VIII, 571 f.; cf. also: 563, 570.

die schottischen Schlösser in der Zeit ausgesehen haben, aber wir wissen ganz bestimmt, dass sie nicht im Tudorstil gebaut waren. Im Nordwesten Europas herrschten damals die Normannen, und der normannische Baustil kam nach England, wenige Jahrzehnte nach dem Tode Macbeths. *Der Normannenstil ist ein Zeitgenoss Macbeths, und darin liegt die Berechtigung, ihn für die schottischen Schlösser jener Zeit zu akzeptieren.*"

But even Fontane's devotion to truth does not make the demand for accuracy absolute. Here again it is evident that accuracy is for him but the handmaid of art, that the only absolute ends to be served in dramaturgy are unity, proportion, dramatic effect. "Winter's Tale" impresses him (L. T.) as showing excessive stress upon what should serve unobtrusively as mere setting.[1] He suggests improvement (1875) in an already praiseworthy banquet scene in "Macbeth" as follows:[2]

". . . *wäre alles minder prächtig, nordisch*-grauer in der Farbe, namentlich schottisch-ärmlicher in der Architektur gewesen, so würde die Wirkung dieser Scene noch grösser gewesen sein. . . . Auch in Bezug hierauf sind wir weit entfernt, den *vielbehandelten historischen Aechtheitspunkt* zur Hauptsache machen zu wollen; kann man diese Aechtheit haben — und Icolmskill, die Insel, auf der die schottischen Könige (speziell auch Macbeth) begraben wurden, bietet mehr oder minder die Gelegenheit dazu — so mag man sie geben; das *Entscheidende bleibt aber immer die Frage:* ist das Aechtere auch das Bessere, *das heisst, das dramatisch Wirkungsvollere?* Es giebt nichts Grausigeres als das Turmzimmer in Holy Rood, in dem Rizzio zu den Füssen Maria Stuarts ermordet wurde, and zwar nichts Grausigeres *deshalb*, weil das Zimmerchen nur fünf Schritt im Quadrat hat. . . . Und wie der Raum als solcher, so ist auch die Farbe, die ihn schmückt oder füllt, von Wichtigkeit. . . . Zu *viel* tritt in Widerspruch zu der Dunkelwirkung des Ganzen, zu *wenig* zeigt die Absicht und verstimmt. Sollen wir kurz angeben, was uns als Ideal für diese Gastmahlsscene vorschwebt, so ist es eine weite, gedrückte Halle, Rundbogen, kurze Säulen, alles grau und braun, Feldsteinfarben, gehoben hier und dort durch Teppichbilder, inmitten dieser dunkelgetönten Architektur aber viel *Gold* und *Rot:* die Kronen, die Spangen, die Krönungsmäntel."

[1] W, 2, VIII, 501, 526 f. [2] *V. Z.* Nov. 19, B 1.

Again, of the setting for "Hamlet" he writes (1877):[1]

"Schwere Rundbogen auf kurzen Säulen passt zu der Zeit wie zu dem Inhalt des Stücks. Wo hiervon abgegangen wurde, wie zum Anfang des dritten Akts, wo Hamlet und Ophelia in der Gallerie zusammentreffen, ist es nicht zum Schaden geschehen; eine *gedrückte Architektur* würde hier stören."

There are also numerous detailed concrete practical suggestions in Fontane's criticism showing again the underlying esthetic principles of proportion, truth, and unity in the production of illusion. The use of wood instead of canvas for scenery in London (L. T.) gives a stability which increases the impression of reality. Fontane remarks in this connection that when the flowing night-robes of Lady Macbeth set all the columns in motion, no one thinks that this might be considered symbolic of the weakness and approaching fall of the house of Macbeth. The English understand the use of space to increase the effect of terror better than the Germans. In the Sadler's Wells performance of "Macbeth" (L. T.) the suspense attending the scene of Duncan's murder is increased greatly by the arrangement of the sleeping-apartments so that no unnecessary distance separates the audience from the deed they are following in imagination. There is a similar gain in the banquet scene through economy of stage-space. For Part I of "Henry IV" he recommends (L. T.) the Sadler's Wells division of the interior of the Wild Boar tavern in East Cheap (Act II), and the use of deep perspective and scenery wings to present the three parts of the battle-field (Act V). In "Hamlet" (Berlin, 1877) the stage for "The Mousetrap" is too far from the audience. The play has consequently the effect of a tableau and loses its power.[2]

There is a group of definite suggestions concerning the advantageous use of light that seem almost commonplace to us today. The poetic charm of the elf-dance in "Midsummer Night's Dream" (L. T.) is largely due to the shimmer of moonlight and to gradual decrease in intensity of light and

[1] *V. Z.* Feb. 16, B 3.

[2] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 573 f., 567, 551 f.; *V. Z.* Feb. 16, 1877, B 3.

the accompanying change from distinct to indistinct shadows. The single dim light upon the stage as Lady Macbeth (L. T.) listens in the murder scene is an important factor in producing horror.[1] The moonlight on the ocean and the pause of the ghost in the deep shadows of the pillars render the appearance of the ghost in "Hamlet" effective, but the use of a pale, sulphurous light for its final disappearance seems needlessly melodramatic:[2]

"Dies heisst aber geistreich sein an der unrechten Stelle, und führt dem Shakespeare Hilfen zu, die er nicht brauchen kann."

Although the animation of the statue in "Winter's Tale" (1886) is by no means perfectly done in Berlin, Fontane recalls that Kean had produced perfect illusion by drapery effects and art in illumination, apparently the changing of a blue light to a warmer shade as the figure showed signs of life.[3]

There are few references to musical details, but these indicate at least spasmodic disregard for unity of effect on the part of the director in Germany. Fontane commends (L. T.) the Scotch martial music in the Sadler's Wells "Macbeth" as a distinct addition.[4] In a criticism of "Twelfth Night" (1874), which he pronounces in general one of three successes of the winter on the Royal Stage of Berlin, he writes:[5]

"Warum muss — wenn unser unmusikalisches Ohr uns nicht trügt —immer dieselbe Flöten- und Harfenmelodie, beinah spieldosenartig, hinter der Scene gespielt werden? Wenn man 'Aschenbrödel' drei Tage vorher unter diesen Klängen hat einschlafen und erwachen sehn, so überrascht es einigermassen, dieselbe 'süsse Weise' auch am illyrischen Hofe des Herzogs Orsino wiederzufinden."

He suggests (1877) that it would be wise to have the harvesters in Gensichen's "Euphrosyne" sing something other than "Freudvoll und leidvoll."[6]

[1] Fontane writes similarly of the effective use of half-light for this same scene in Berlin in 1875 (*V. Z.* Nov. 18, B 3).
[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 16, 1877, B 3.
[3] *V. Z.* Sept. 30, Abendausgabe.
[4] W, 2, VIII, 564.
[5] *V. Z.* Jan. 11, B 4.
[6] *V. Z.* Oct. 27, B 3.

From numerous references to the wisdom necessary in the representation of natural phenomena and of the supernatural, it is evident that Fontane would not attempt to bar the supernatural from drama and the stage. He recognizes the fact, however, that one approaches here dangerously near the ludicrous and that only a fine sense for esthetic differences can attain the desired result. He writes of the naturalness of the roll of the thunder and the pelting of the rain in "Macbeth":[1]

"Wir hatten den Donner direkt über unsern Köpfen. Im zweiten Akt, während der Ermordung Duncans, werden die Schrecken des Moments durch diese klein erscheinende Äusserlichkeit nicht wenig gesteigert."

In a criticism of the same drama as given on the Royal Stage (1875) he writes:[2]

". . . ein wenig zu viel. Was in der Musik der Paukenschlag ist, ist in Lear und Macbeth der Donnerschlag. Ein schlechter hebt die Wirkung von drei guten wieder auf. Dies und das — weil unvermeidlich — darf verloren gehen; aber jene Stellen der Dichtung, die mächtiger sind als aller Aufruhr der Elemente, diese dürfen nicht dem Lärm, der blos äusserlichen Einwirkung auf die Nerven geopfert werden."

He commends the noiseless appearance (L. T.) of the ghost of Banquo from a side niche as preferable to the common device, attended by noise not suggestive of spirits, of having him rise before the chair designed for him at the banquet.[3] He opposes Oechelhäuser's opinion (1877) that the ghosts in "Richard III" should be mere visions, quoting in this connection from Director A. Marcks of Hanover, with whom he agrees:[4]

"Ich gebe zu, dass die Reden der Geister bei schlechter oder mangelhafter Recitation auf einen Teil des Publikums langweilig oder gar lächerlich wirken können, nie aber kann dies der Fall sein, bei wundervoller Darstellung und einigem darauf verwandten Fleiss; ja die Wirkung muss um so grösser sein, je grösser die anverwandten Mittel sind. Und zu diesen Mitteln gehört vor allem der Ton. . . .

[1] W, 2, VIII, 563.
[2] *V. Z.* Nov. 18, B 3.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 575.
[4] *V. Z.* Nov. 27, B 3.

Ich bin fern von aller Coulissenreisserei, aber diese Reden, und seien es auch nur wenige, scheinen mir nothwendig zu sein. Richard muss seine Seele daran wetzen für den Monolog aller Monologe."

The necessity for a good ensemble in order to attain a worthy reproduction of a dramatic conception proves, finally, common ground on which the message to directors and that to actors meet. The whole group of suggestions concerning the wise adaptation of players to parts has value for both actor and manager. The Royal Stage was, in Fontane's opinion, weak in this respect; on the other hand, he ascribes Laube's fame and success as director largely to the insight and individuality attributed to him in the assignment of roles.[1]

For both director and actor careful study of three things is necessary: the original dramatic conception; the historical and cultural background which fact and the author's adaptation of fact produce for the role; and the physical, intellectual, and emotional qualities of the actor who is to play it. In the role of King John, for example, Kean's very shortcomings of figure and voice were calculated to portray a small, fearful, whimsical, inconsiderate nature; yet the part of Richard II, which Emil Devrient gave to perfection, Fontane pronounced impossible for Kean, since Kean's appearance and temperament were at variance with both historical character and poetic conception.[2]

Insight into national limitations of temperament enters so largely into the question of assignment of roles that success or failure is often dependent upon it. Fontane writes (1874) of Dumas' "Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle" that the charm of the play is specifically French and that given without French temperament it is champagne without the sparkle. Related to this idea is his doubt (1871) as to whether any actress without Catholic training and traditions behind her could give the distinctive touch to the role of Maria Stuart that Adelaide Ristori gave it. For Lear (1881) he argued a

[1] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 424 (1873).
[2] W, 2, VIII, 508 f., 530 ff.

universal stamp. On account of the leveling influence of years, the old man drawing near to childhood again in life's circle is everywhere the same. Hamlet, on the contrary, is distinctly a northern conception; and Romance actors, in spite of an unusual degree of realism in portraying anything that can be observed and copied, lack ability to conceive and reproduce the inner conflict.[1]

Some roles are practically impossible for an unromantic temperament; for the Sultan in "Nathan der Weise" the element of romance is important in order to avoid the false extremes of the prosaic and the sentimental; for Käthchen of Heilbronn and the Maid of Orleans this element is vital and must amount to a poetic belief in the possibility of the experience involved.[2]

Other roles cannot succeed without a natural demoniac element; the Countess Orsina, Adelheid von Runeck, Queen Margaret in "Henry VI" are not convincing if "blond" in temperament; even Wallenstein and Hamlet demand a certain demoniac depth.[3]

There is an interesting group of criticisms based on voice-quality and the connection between voice and soul, which contain much of value for both director and actor. Fontane writes in praise of Kahle's Lear (1871):

". . . die *ganze Scala der Affekte und Seelenzustände* ging der Künstler mit gleicher Meisterschaft durch: königliche Würde, eitles Selbstgefühl, Zorn, Schmerz, Wehmut, aufflammende Raserei, kindisches Bangen, zusammenbrechende Schwäche. Alle Töne standen ihm zu Gebot. *Seine Stimme*, voll Kraft, Wohlklang, Biegung, vor allem voll *jenes seelengeborenen Metalls*, ohne das die Tragödie die letzte Staffel nicht erreichen kann, weiss bei ihm auszugleichen, was seiner kaum mittelgrossen äusseren Erscheinung fehlt; — jetzt rollen die Worte wie Donner, dann klagen sie wieder träumerisch, wie Herbstwind, der über abgefallene Blätter weht."

[1] W, 2, VIII, 125 f., 403, 415, 409 f.

[2] *V. Z.*: Aug. 20, 1872, B 2; May 13, 1873, B 2; Mar. 26, 1789, B 1; May 11, 1880, B 2.

[3] W, 2, VIII 36 ff. — *V. Z.*: May 30, 1873, B 2; Nov. 14, 1871, B 2; Apr. 8, 1889, Abendausgabe.

In connection with praise of Frl. Lehnbach's Clärchen (1872), he deplores the lack in North Germany of a sympathetic voice-quality:

"Die Stimme. Wie sich uns dieser rheinisch-süddeutscher Klang wieder wohlthuend um das Herz legte! Wir empfinden dann immer mit einem gewissen Schmerz, dass wir auf dieser unserer märkischen Sandscholle wohl *politische*, aber nicht nationale Deutsche sind. Wir sind etwas anderes, modern-Eigenartiges, vielleicht (für den, der es hören will) etwas geistig höher Potenzirtes, aber den eigentlich deutschen Ton haben wir *nicht*. . . . Der Stimme entsprach hier die Gestalt. Jeder Moment ein in sich abgeschlossenes plastisches Bild. *Alle Bewegungen einfach, ungesucht*, und doch eben so fein wie reich nüancirt."

He writes (1877) that the voice for Astarte in "Manfred" is a difficult problem, the solution of which depends rather upon nature than upon art; (1882) that Frl. Kessler has attained a triumph in her Lady Milford by overcoming the prosaic tone which had made her successful previously only in modern salon-roles.[1]

A further requisite for ensemble work — and one for which Fontane again commends Laube — is the training of actors for their parts. He writes (1871) that the directors should protest against the false interpretation of roles or of important speeches; (1872) that the Royal Stage does not understand the art of training.[2]

A royal stage should set for itself the further aim of supporting an actor for comparatively few parts. There are various pleas for the luxury of histrionic specialization with emphasis upon the injustice done to the impersonator in the assignment of a role not suited to his talent. Of the resources of the Royal Stage in Berlin to meet this need Fontane writes:[3]

[1] *V. Z.*: Feb. 26, 1871, B 4; Mar. 10, 1872, B 4; Mar. 30, 1877, B 3; Mar. 12, 1882, B 1.

[2] *V. Z.* Nov. 14, 1871, B 2; W, 2, VIII, 41. — As late as 1887 the failure of the Royal Stage in this line is noted. (*V. Z.* Feb. 11, No. 70, B).

[3] *V. Z.* Nov. 14, 1871, B 2.

". . . *diese sind unzureichend*, ganz besonders auch in Bezug auf Zahl und Umfang. Der Personal-Bestand ist einfach nicht gross genug; so werden die Kräfte nicht *nur ungebührlich angestrengt*, sondern auch *an offenbar falscher Stelle verwendet*. . . . Mann muss hervorragende Schauspieler gar nicht in die Lage bringen, Dinge spielen zu sollen, zu denen sie nicht passen. Soll dabei etwa von 'Geldrücksichten' gesprochen werden, so berührt uns dies geradezu komisch. Diese dürfen in der neuen Kaiserstadt, einem solchen Institut gegenüber, gar nicht existiren. Es muss sich finden."

The director should demand, finally, that each role be given its proper proportion, and the artistic interest of the actor should in turn show itself superior to personal ambition in this respect. Fontane commends the English stage (L. T.) for the fact that no part is made aggressive by undue emphasis. He acknowledges that the method may sometimes prove a hindrance to the full development of histrionic ability, but its result is, on the other hand, often salutary for the individual actor in preventing a false line of development. The English stage shows, therefore, normal human beings and avoids affectation, the falseness (Unwahrheit) which result in Germany from the actor's desire for prominence.[1]

"Herr Förster hat in ihnen sein Regietalent wiederum glänzend bethätigt. Die Belebung der Scene, wie sie im '*Deutschen Theater*' consequent angestrebt wird, dieses stete Herausarbeiten von Gruppen und Bildern, welche alle zu allen in Beziehung setzen und in ihrer charakteristischen Pracht sich der Phantasie mächtig einprägen, *ist für uns in Berlin etwas ganz Neues*. Wir sind viel zu sehr gewohnt zu fragen, wie war Liedtke und die Frieb, Bornay und Fr. Niemann-Rabe."

In the message which is addressed more specifically to actors alone, although it contains also much of value to directors, the prevailing note is again personal responsibility, individual loyalty in the service of art. The incompleteness of results shows that actors do not properly estimate the importance

[1] W, 2, VIII, 585 f. — Fontane's praise of the ensemble effects in "Die Karlsschüler" as given in the *Deutsches Theater* indicates the persistence of individual ambition on the Berlin stage as a whole as late as 1883. He writes with especial reference to ensemble scenes (*V. Z.* Dec. 4, B 1):

of study in order to render faithfully the conception of the author entirely free from the bonds of their own personality. Art demands that beauty serve truth, and only that degree of beauty is natural and true, which is the expression of the author's thought and of the actor's inner experience in giving life to this thought. Adelaide Ristori is praised (1871) for the artistic husbandry shown in the use of her gifts, in the proportioning of her powers to the demand of the moment, in the use of personality as a mere means to an end in the service of the dramatist. Such results are the fruits of careful study only.[1] Fontane mentions the fact that Mrs. Siddons is said to have played her roles by instinct; but although he calls Döring a genius, he says of Döring's boast that his figures rose before his mind in an instant, complete and lifelike, that these complete figures, although always interesting, were sometimes false.[2]

Again there is the idea that the historic role presents particular difficulty in order to give the author's conception in the light of fact and make the result artistically harmonious and historically true. The ideal here is rarely attained, since it involves that highest degree of art that gives the impression of perfect spontaneity.[3]

One condition is possible, however, which absolves the actor in case of failure to make a character live: absurdity of detail in a great conception especially may be overcome, but no histrionic art can redeem what is fundamentally false. Fontane places in this category the role of Uriel Acosta. He writes (1873):[4]

"Meine Empfindung verwirft Uriel Acosta und ist umgekehrt nicht nur durch alles Shakespearische hingerissen, sondern sogar

[1] W, 2, VIII, 402 ff. — *V. Z.* Dec. 5, B 2.

[2] W, 2, VIII: 566 (L. T.), 23 (1884).

[3] This height Fontane saw attained in Kahle's interpretation of Richard III. He writes that it was free from any trace of study: "Alles frisch und frei, stark und gewaltig, wie ein Strudel die Seele des Hörers fassend und sie in die dämonischen Tiefen reissend." (*V. Z.* June 13, 1873, B 2.)

[4] W, 2, X, 308.

auch durch die 'Räuber.' Detailblödsinn schadet nichts, wenn nur das Ganze richtig gefühlt und gedacht ist."

Brachvogel's Narziss belongs also in the list of rejected characters. Mme. de Pompadour appeals to Fontane as a great historic role, but he says (1879) that the play as a whole transgresses in ideas and situations as does "Uriel Acosta" in character. Of the fact that Brachvogel's originality is frequently compared to that of Schiller in "Die Räuber," he writes (1881):[1]

"Aber welche Welt von Unterschied! Genialität, die tollt, ist herzerfrischend. Genialität, die quasselt, ist bloss unangenehm. Und wovon quasselt sie hier mit Vorliebe? Von 'Logik' und 'Prämisse'. Welches Labsal daneben ist das einfache Hexeneinmaleins: 'Aus eins mach' zehn, Und zwei lass gehn, Und drei mach' gleich, So bist du reich usw.' Und trotzdem dreissig Jahre lang dieselbe Bewunderung."

Again, in what he terms a thankless part, Fontane does not hold the actor responsible for a strong positive result. His obligation toward the organic whole is, however, undiminished, as shown in the brief criticism of Goneril and Regan (1871):[2]

". . . *freilich keine dankbaren Rollen*, aber sie sind *viel zu bedeutend, als dass man bei ihrer Besetzung leichthin zu Werke gehen dürfte. Sind sie unausreichend besetzt, so wirken diese beiden Rollen einfach degoutant* und dadurch störend oder gefahrbringend für das *Ganze*."

The witch in "Der Traum ein Leben" falls into the category of thankless roles because indistinctly portrayed;[3] Leander ("Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen") can be accepted, especially in Act IV, only out of respect to a great poet and the abundant poetic power that precedes this act;[4] in Heyse's "Die Weisheit Salomos" the Queen of Sheba gives little

[1] W, 2, VIII, 170 ff. — *V. Z.* Dec. 11, B 2.

[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 26, B 4 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 29 f.).

[3] *V. Z.* Dec. 14, 1878, B 3.

[4] *V. Z.* Oct. 14, 1818, B 1. — A former criticism (1874) sums up the general weakness of this role as follows: "Im ersten Akt ist er ein Schweigender, im fünften ein Toter." (W, 2, VIII, 108.)

opportunity to an actor, since a supposedly impressive figure is made dramatically inferior here in the service of a simple human truth.[1]

But more frequently the tenor of Fontane's message is the unique responsibility of the actor as a collaborator, so to speak, of the dramatist. If a play or a character is not falsely conceived, it rests with the actor in many cases to make a doubtful situation or an indistinct figure convincing. Clever action motivating the change of rapiers in the duel of Hamlet and Laertes (L. T.) divests the scene of the improbability often charged against it. The role of Emilia ("Othello"), usually considered a minor part, is in England given a place inferior to none in Acts IV and V (L. T.); the English interpretation renders it the distinct counterpart (Gegenstück) of Desdemona, the supplement to her loyalty, thus giving fullest strength and unity to the entire conception.[2] He writes (1874) of Iffland's "Der Spieler":[3]

"Das Stück . . . ist . . . sehr auf das Spiel gestellt. . . . Ist dies vollendet, so zählt es zu dem Wahrsten und Wirkungsvollsten was man sehen kann, ist es dagegen unvollkommen, so findet nicht nur eine entsprechende Abschwächung der Wirkung statt, sondern auch die Wahrheit, die Begreiflichkeit dessen, was sich vor unseren Augen vollzieht, geht zu nicht geringem Teil verloren. . . . vom bühnenpraktischen Standpunkt aus jedoch ist gegen solche Stücke wenig zu sagen, so lange Schauspieler da sind, die, ihre Genialität in die Hauptrolle hineintragend, das Skizzenhafte auszuführen, dem Keim Wachstum und Gestaltung zu geben verstehen."

The full possibilities of such a character as Tiefenbacher are realized only when every word and glance has meaning such as Kahle gives it (1878).[4] Fontane even justifies Christian

[1] Fontane does not give this as his reason for the simple statement that the Queen of Sheba is a thankless role. This reason may, however, be inferred from his whole discussion of the drama, — a vindication on poetic grounds of Heyse's independence of historic fact in portraying the love of Solomon for the gardener's daughter, Sulamith (cf. *V. Z.* Feb. 21, 1888, B 1).

[2] W, 2, VIII, 541, 482 f.

[3] *V. Z.* Feb. 8, B 4.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 69.

Ulrich in modifying Otto Ludwig's conception of the *Erbförster*, attributing a real service to him in departing in his interpretation (1882) not only from histrionic tradition but from absolute accuracy:[1]

"Er betonte, so lange wie möglich, die zwar urkräftige, zugleich aber gutgeartete, beinahe joviale Natur, und liess ein leis humoristisch gefärbtes Element auch da noch vorwalten, wo andere Darsteller schon den Hitzkopf und Cholericus in die Front Stellen. Der Vorzug einer solchen moderirten Auffassung liegt nicht in einem grösseren Maass von Richtigkeit, sondern in einem grösseren Maasse von *Erquicklichkeit*."

Krause performs a creative service for Illo (1884, "Wallenstein's Tod") through the addition of distinct local coloring of the Brandenburg type to accuracy in following textual suggestions.[2] Ludwig's stress upon the seaman, soldier, and tippler rather than upon the poet type in interpreting Wildenbruch's Marlowe (1884) adds force to the dramatic idea of a human soul in the fatal grip of evil.[3]

Similarly, the artistic appeal of an entire play may be greatly decreased or even destroyed by a false line of interpretation. Fontane argues (1871) for the madness of insanity in Lear as preferable to the Lear of pathological type, who calls forth only pity; the Shaksperean conception demands that the method chosen be the one suggestive of power in spite of madness; not the lifeless eye, but the gloomy depth from which light flashes gives the "fantastic touch" necessary in order to "*idealize a reality* in itself devoid of beauty." The emphasis in the character of Carlos

[1] *V. Z.* Mar. 8, B 1.

[2] *V. Z.* Nov. 18, B 1. One paragraph of this report is given: W, 2 VIII, 76.

[3] That Fontane's dislike for poet heroes did not determine this point of view seems clear from the general tone of this criticism, that the more unusual conception of Marlowe's appearance is in harmony with the dramatic theme, through which especially this drama is for Fontane superior to "Harold" and "Die Karolinger." Fontane criticizes this drama as severely as any other by Wildenbruch for lack of motivation, especially in the treatment of Walsingham. (W. 2, VIII, 260 ff.; and *V. Z.* Dec. 14, B 1.)

in "Clavigo" must be not upon human feeling but upon cool calculation, since the entire drama loses in convincing power if Carlos is not made the incarnation of an inexorable principle. The interpretation of Questenberg as a courtier under forty with a trace of party envy gives Wallenstein (1878) too soon a certain justification for following his ambition, since it makes jealousy and not imperial authority the determining force at the Viennese court. So important is the bearing of this character upon dramatic effect and soundness that Fontane attaches no value in this case to the possibility of historic fact as a basis for Kahle's interpretation. He recommends without reserve the older and less ambitious Questenberg. Through exaggerated declamation, Matkowsky increases the inesthetic element (1887) in Don Cesar's narrative ("Die Braut von Messina") of the obsequies of his father and his own first glimpse of Beatrice.[1]

The suggestions to actors have indicated already that character analysis is a prominent factor in Fontane's reports. This is, to be sure, no uncommon element in theater criticism. The lines into which Fontane directs such analysis are, however, somewhat distinctive and entirely characteristic in that they group themselves largely about recurrent principles: the importance of the natural and its connection with truth and artistic unity; the incompatibility of the natural and the rhetorical; the unreality of extreme pathos and sentimentality; the superiority of genuine personality to conscious cultivation of the poetic.[2]

Yet Fontane makes it clear here as elsewhere throughout his work that the natural and the realistic are not a law in themselves, but that they serve the higher esthetic principles of fitness and proportion. He questions, for instance, the excess of reserve in Berndal's interpretation of Questenberg and of Wrangel (1871) as inartistic although perhaps realistic:[3]

[1] Cf. W, 2, VIII: 29 (1871), 41 f. (1872), 72 ff. (1878), 398 f. (1887).

[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 26, 1884, B 1. — He writes here that the role of Viola requires personality, — roguishness and wit, gaiety and freshness, that poetic tenderness alone is not sufficient for it.

[3] *V. Z.*, Nov. 14, B 2 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 70 ff.).

"*Als Historiker* und Charakteristiker hat er sehr wahrscheinlich Recht, aber nach *jenem Kunstgesetz, das unter Umständen ein sich Freimachen* vom Natürlichen, eine massvolle Ueberschreitung der Wirklichkeit fordert, . . . hat er vielleicht nicht immer Recht. Er bringt sich dadurch auch um erlaubte Effekte."

He writes (1877) that Ludwig's restless pacing during the speech preceding the battle in "Henry V" adds military color to the scene but decreases the appeal inherent in the beauty of the language; and Fontane formulates here a tenet to which he holds throughout his work as critic:[1]

"Aber die Kunst hat nicht blos die Wirklichkeit zu befragen; es muss da eine Vermittlung, ein neutraler Boden gefunden werden, auf dem sich fester und ruhiger stehen lässt."

In spite of his conviction that modern histrionic art is superior to that of the Weimar school, he admits (1879) that the latter is better able to cope with such a role as Tell, that the Schiller roles can come into their own only through the rescue of idealism from realism.[2] He writes similarly (1882), in comparing Conrad's von Kalb with Dehnicke's conception of the character, that Conrad's is the more realistic, has more of the genuine court-marshal in it; that Dehnicke's is, however, more in accordance with Schiller's portrayal and tends, therefore, to more complete harmony in the whole.[3]

That Fontane was capable of these fine distinctions between the realistic *per se* and the realistic merely as an approach to artistic completeness seems all the more remarkable in view of the importance he attached to the smallest

[1] W, 2, VIII, 366.

[2] *V. Z.*, Nov. 13, B 2. — Fontane wrote (1875) that the North-German exaggeration of external signs of emotion destroyed the tragic power of the interpretation, that the South-German school of acting, represented by Weimar and Munich, excelled the North-German in plastic effects (*V. Z.* Nov. 19, B 1); he complained (1878) that there was no romanticism in the heart of the average actor (W, 2, VIII, 84), and again (1884) that Schiller was not as a rule adequately interpreted (W, 2, VIII, 80).

[3] *V. Z.* Mar. 12, B 1.

lifelike details; it is, in fact, only through consideration of these minute points that one can appreciate fully the prominence of the realistic vein in his esthetic nature. Along with innumerable suggestions having to do with various points not heretofore mentioned, such as tempo, emphasis, pronunciation, the effective use of silence, of repetition, of variation, there are a goodly number showing the keenest observation of externalities, the most intimate knowledge of the relation between human impulse and action; one sees here, as it were, those faculties in process of growth of which there is fullest evidence in the completed narratives of Fontane's latest literary development. There is, for instance, this suggestion (1872) from a report on "Kabale und Liebe":[1]

"Wenn Ferdinand sich ertappt und sein Liebesverhältniss halb und halb verraten sieht, so muss er zusammenschrecken, aber nicht den Kopf einziehen. Er darf zucken, aber nicht sich ducken. Das tut kein Major. Ferner wenn Luise (Akt III) das Tuch auf den Stuhl werfen will und es fällt daneben, muss sie es auflangen. Luise ist eines armen Stadtmusikanten Tochter und armer Leute Kinder schonen, auch inmitten leidenschaftlicher Erregung, ihre Sachen. Das ist ihnen *eben zweite Natur geworden.*"

He explains as follows his objection (1878) to the fact that Ludwig, as Mortimer in "Maria Stuart," had taken Leicester's hand from above:[2]

"Mortimer tritt auf Leicester zu, und erfasst, mitten im Gespräch, die Hand des Grafen von ober her. Das ist, glaube ich, unstatthaft. Es ist, als ob ein junger Herr von Rohr oder Schlippenbach die Hand des Fürsten Bismarck von oben her ergreifen wollte."

Sincere interest in art, in the artistic function of the stage, and in the improvement of the German stage to fulfil this function, reveal themselves in this mass of varied details. The public must demand truth. The dramatist must disregard self and know life, not only through observation of the palpable, but through intuitive insight into the souls and

[1] *V. Z.* Aug. 28, B 2. [2] *V. Z.* Mar. 27, B 3.

thoughts of men. The director and the actor must make the consideration of gain subservient to the requirements of a high artistic ideal. Both must approach their task with reverence for art, with untiring diligence, with practical insight, and an esthetic sense capable of appreciating fine distinctions and of securing an accurate balance in the union of beauty and truth. Beauty cannot exist without harmony, and truth involves both the reality of life and the vision of the poet-seer.

Finally, these demands upon all the factors which unite in the creation of a vital stage for vital art cannot yield to the excuse that stubborn conditions are an insurmountable barrier. From 1873 there is a word in this connection with special reference to actors:[1]

"Wir wollen gern einräumen, dass, je länger wir unsere Theaterzustände beobachten, es uns, Schritt haltend mit unserer wachsenden Kenntniss, immer zweifelhafter wird, ob man zur Zeit diese Dinge *überhaupt besser darzustellen im Stande ist.* Das sollte nun eigentlich alle Kritik entwaffnen, aber andererseits *bleibt es doch auch ewig wahr, dass man die Erscheinungen in der Kunst nicht am Alltäglichen, oder an dem zufällig vorhandenen Bestande, sondern am Ideale messen solle.* An einem Ideale, das man nicht blos in der Brust trägt, sondern das einem doch auch, Gott sei Dank, manch liebes Mal verkörpert entgegengetreten ist, wenn man noch *Lenim* und *Seydelmann* gekannt, und die Crelinger, die Rahel und die Ristori gesehen hat!"

From 1883, with reference to both actors and directors:[2]

"Es fehlt hier am Ernst, Fleiss, Tiefe. Sagen zu wollen, es liesse sich nicht machen und ginge nicht anders, ist ein Satz, den ich nicht gelten lassen kann. Sind die Stücke so schlecht, dass sie solche Vertiefung oder solchen Aufwand an Kraft und Zeit nicht lohnen, so gebe man sie nicht. Bringt man sie dagegen überhaupt, so muss man sie durch eindringendsten Fleiss auch zu halten oder, wo dies nicht nötig, ihnen ein frischeres und längeres Leben zu geben suchen. Gewiss ist dies schwer, aber man geriert sich nicht umsonst als Hauptstadt und erstes Theater. *Noblesse oblige.* Was ich an Forderungen gestellt habe, kann geleistet werden."

[1] *V. Z.* May 30, B 2 (report on "Henry VI").

[2] W, 2, VIII, 427 f.

The following from 1884 is typical of Fontane's general attitude and may therefore be applied to all concerned:[1]

"Man darf aber in der Kunst nie ganz sicher sein. Auch der grösste Meister muss immer ein Zweifler an sich selbst und ein Suchender bleiben."

[1] *V. Z.* Sept. 23, B 1.

CHAPTER IV

Fontane's Dramatic Theory

"Was beim Volke aushalten soll, muss wahr sein, muss Natur und Kern haben, wie das Volk selbst. Nur die Kunst dauert bei ihm, nicht die Künstelei. . . . Die Kunst soll wahr sein, aber nicht ohne Idealität." ("Aus England," 1860: 184; 133.)

The attempt to discover the dramatic theory of a man who professed entire freedom from fixed principles is obviously not without a paradoxical element. But independence of schools and the ability to set aside tradition, if the case in hand seems to justify its own laws, are very different from the repudiation of everything that might constitute an individual norm. The latter must be present, if work would have any unity or ballast; what Fontane himself termed the essence of able criticism, the explanation of sensations, depends upon such a norm; the very sensations which entail acceptance or rejection express themselves spontaneously in terms of its fundamentals.

Although here, again, a mosaic of infinitesimal parts is required to give even an approximate conception of Fontane's critical work in its entirety, certain basic ideas, noted before, are always prominent. These are *life* and *art*, the two comprehensive sources of his interest in the drama. His whole treatment of the drama resolves itself, to be sure, in the last analysis into a discussion of material and method, a point of departure by no means unusual in criticism; the individuality of Fontane's critical work lies in the fidelity with which he submits all material to the test: "Is it or should it be lifelike?" and all method to the questions: "In how far does it meet the need of the material? To what extent is it genuine art?"

Fontane is, however, in no sense an extremist as regards either theories or schools. He was never lured by his enthusiasm for realism to renounce every other type of art. Practically the only tenet that he states as absolute occurs as early as 1871 in the demand for unity of style or conception within the original limits chosen by the author.[1] This principle, involving primarily the adaptation of method to material, prevails as a basic element in his criticism. It is restated with emphasis on detail (1874) in the requirement that every character, every situation, be subservient to a definite law determined by the genre in hand.[2] It appears as late as 1894 in the praise of Sudermann's "Fritzchen" as evidence of Fontane's enduring conviction that mere limitation in extent does not render material unworthy of treatment; notwithstanding the low valuation that Fontane puts upon Sudermann's work as a whole, he commends in this one-act play the union of happy material and complete dramatic art.[3]

In the violation of this law of inner unity lay for Fontane the chief weakness of many of the more prominent nineteenth-century contributions to the literature of the stage from both German and French writers previous to the naturalistic group. Such violation manifested itself not infrequently in a tendency to treat situation for situation's sake in plays purporting to be comedies of character, for which adequate material seemed in prospect at the outset, but in

[1] W, 2, VIII, 32.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 212.

[3] W, 2, XI, 403 f. (letter of Oct. 13 to Paul Schlenther). Fontane's published reports contain no criticism of Sudermann. An unpublished letter to Mete (Berlin, Oct. 8, 1894) shows human sympathy for him as the butt of much adverse criticism, but it shows also the conviction that the specific attack referred to, the occasion of which is not stated, was justifiable: "Sudermann, für den ich nicht viel übrig habe, tut mir leid; es ist furchtbar, so zerrissen zu werden. Aber ich vermag an solche Zerreisserei auch keinen Tadel zu knüpfen. Wie sollen kluge Leute, die die ganze Hohlheit und Geschraubtheit erkennen, wie sollen die solch Stück besprechen? Ernsthaft? Das geht nicht; so was ganz Verfehltes, an dem mit einem Male die blos heraufgepuffte Unbedeutendheit klar wird, kann nicht feierlich und mit Würde behandelt werden."

which, through the sacrifice of the major interest to one of minor value, the genre was in the process of development not kept pure. Paul Lindau he charges (1878) with having expanded the given material for "Johannistrieb" unnaturally for the sake of making the play fill an entire evening. The story would in Fontane's opinion have made an admirable two-act play, preferably in verse; as used, the inherent poetic value of the material is lost in part through the choice of the prose form, in part through the more detrimental introduction of superfluous stock additions, such as parallel pairs and episodes, designed to make the play entertaining.[1] He finds (1878) in the plays of Sardou a marked family resemblance; background and setting change, but the central plot-situation and the character types never vary. Such readjustment of situation may be termed craftsmanship, but not art.[2] In a report on "Bataille de dames" he writes further (1878) that the French emphasize the comic, the farcical, more than is in keeping with German taste and German esthetic principles; that what gives charm to their work for the instant fails to leave behind[3] it an impression that satisfies.

To the question, touched upon indirectly here, of the difference between comedy and farce, Fontane gives no little space. The play intended for mere amusement was popular on the Royal Stage, and it was frequently neither good

[1] *V. Z.* Feb. 10, B 3. — Lindau made a four-act play of this material.

[2] *V. Z.* Jan. 29, B 4; report on Sardou's "Nos bons villageois," in which Fontane summarizes the dramatic method of Sardou as follows: ". . . das eigentliche Bild ist immer dasselbe. Ein junger Thunichtgut, der mich durch seine hervorragende Don Juan-Nichtberechtigung jedesmal mehr oder weniger überrascht, beliebelt eine schöne junge Frau, geräth in Ungelegenheiten, sieht sich, seitens des Ehemanns, vor einen klapprigen Pistolenkasten gestellt, und empfängt schliesslich, als Recompense für die ausgestandenen Aengste, die Hand der jüngeren, viel hübscheren und viel blonderen Schwester. Ein unerhörter Treffer. Im Mittel-Akt, den man auch ebenso gut den Mitternachts-Akt nennen könnte, werden regelmässig Thüren abgeriegelt und Lampen ausgedreht, mitunter reisst eine Klingelschnur, mitunter auch nicht, und 'Incubus, Incubus, der Sprung vom Balkone macht den Schluss.'"

[3] *V. Z.* Feb. 12, B 3.

comedy nor good burlesque. One of Fontane's persistent aims as stage critic seems to have been to show the failure of his contemporaries among German playwrights to draw a convincing distinction between these genres.

The ideas which he sets forth may be summarized as follows:[1] the farce plays with life; comedy should simply reveal life in the play spirit; the plunge into burlesque must be a daring acrobatic feat, unattended by deliberation, in order that criticism may be disarmed by laughter; comic situation, with almost unlimited freedom as to means and range, provides the only atmosphere in which farce thrives; genuine characters, real people, are therefore a detriment to farce in that they diminish the contagion of jest and prevent the spectator from yielding unreservedly to the ludicrously impossible. Comedy, on the other hand, demands not only individuals from real life, but characters that are worth while, since, as in life, what is purely trivial is only tedious; comedy, romantic drama, or tragedy, may degenerate into farce through the failure to mirror life, but it will not be good farce;[2] nor can material that is in its general nature distinctly farcical be welded into comedy. For this reason Auerbach makes a flagrant error in the choice of method in "Das erlösende Wort." The material requires, in Fontane's opinion (1878), an abandon capable of winning the spectator instantly through the impression of incongruity and separation from real life; what Auerbach produces is a hybrid, not comic enough for farce, not true enough for comedy.[3]

[1] Cf. *V. Z.*: Nov. 21, 1871, B 3; Oct. 17, 1887, No. 484, B.

[2] Fontane writes that Birch-Pfeiffer's "Auf dem Oberhof" becomes farcical through failure to handle worthily what is lofty (W, 2, VIII, 117 f. — from 1872); that in Wildenbruch's "Die Karolinger" improbability of situation in Act III produces a grotesquely comical effect (W, 2, VIII, 263; — from 1887).

[3] Fontane's principle is as follows: ". . . bei Dingen dieser Art kommt es nur auf die Unterhaltlichkeit an. Auerbach hat etwas an und für sich Nichtiges durch Feinheit, durch sorglichen Dialog, durch liebevolle Detailbehandlung, auf eine höhere Stufe heben wollen, aber gerade dadurch hat er sich an seiner Sache geschädigt. Er zwingt uns . . . in eine ernstere Betrachtung hinein, und diese ernstere Betrachtung hält es doch wieder nicht aus" (*V. Z.* Mar. 29, additional to W, 2, VIII, 146 ff.).

In one instance Fontane is lured by the appeal of artistic method to waver even in his conviction that comedy must mirror actual life. The belief in the privilege of the true artist to create his form is revealed in the consideration of a new ideal for comedy, built on the Molière type and answerable to its own distinct laws. Fontane asserts that Molière's comedy, which has come to be regarded as classic, would by no means be so considered if Molière were a contemporary; that Molière's work lacks, in spite of its eternal freshness, the qualities that we admire in Lessing, Kleist, and Sheridan. The context shows[1] that reference here is particularly to lifelike delineation of character; no figure in "Le Malade imaginaire" is without its farcical ingredient for Fontane; the play gives, he says, a presentation of life such as one sees in comic opera; traces of the Italian folk-theater in each subsequent scene lead him to await constantly the appearance of Harlequin and Columbine. Nevertheless, so great is his admiration for Molière's art, that although he had but one week before declared ludicrous situations the essence of farce, he is now inclined to waive the demand that comedy avoid the farcical element to stand always fundamentally upon life and truth. He writes:

"Es scheint doch noch ein Höheres, mindestens ein Anderes, Gleichberechtigtes zu geben, das, ähnlich wie in der grossen Tragödie, die blosse Wirklichkeit, die sozusagen bürgerliche Lebenswahrheit der Charaktere aufgeben darf, um auch im Komischen einem Ideale nachzustreben, einem Ideale, das seine eigenen Gesetze hat."

To determine Fontane's ultimate attitude toward Molière, however, it is necessary to consider also a later criticism,

[1] Cf. W, 2, VIII, 30 ff. — Fontane does not enumerate here the admirable qualities of the dramatists mentioned. The points that he praises in Lessing's comedy elsewhere are classic language and truthful character portrayal (W, 2, VIII, 33, report on "Minna von Barnhelm," 1870); he commends characterization and economy in Kleist's "Der zerbrochene Krug," but adds that "Minna von Barnhelm" has the same good points and greater *Liebenswürdigkeit* (*V. Z.* Oct. 29, 1886, Abendausgabe). This is his only report on "Der zerbrochene Krug" (cf. above, p. 61) and the only report on "Minna von Barnhelm" that does not treat presentation alone. There is no report on Sheridan.

that of "Tartuffe" (1885), which gives convincing evidence that the idea of a possible advantageous separation of comedy from life had only temporary hold upon him. Agreeing with Eduard Engel, from whom he quotes, he sees in Molière on account of basic truth the most reliable source for understanding the sentiment of the seventeenth-century citizen-class of Paris, the Gallic spirit of the seventeenth century in contradistinction to the Roman spirit that dominated the court of Versailles and its literature. Yet Fontane's personal verdict in the same report is that in spite of the ineffable individual charm due to Molière's noble purpose, to his penetrating clearness, his good sense, spirit, wit, and grace, his work lies outside the pale of real character-comedy, because his people inspire belief only in the thought they serve to develop, not in themselves as human beings.[1]

"Er ist sentenziös wie Larochefoucauld, erreicht aber grössere Wirkungen, weil seine Sentenzen nicht blos in der Luft herumfliegen, sondern bestimmte persönliche Träger haben und aus ganz bestimmten Situationen heraus erwachsen. Aber so hoch dieser Werth des Sentenziösen und zugleich künstlerisch Tendenziösen veranschlagt werden mag, beide Vorzüge reichen nicht aus, ein Stück für uns wirksam zu machen, zu dessen Menschen und Situationen wir kein volles Vertrauen mehr haben. Kein volles Vertrauen, weil kein volles Verständniss. . . . Ein solcher Tartuffe . . . wäre heutigen Tages absolut ungefährlich, weil er sich in jeder Sphäre der Gesellschaft, vielleicht die der armen adligen Fräulein ausgenommen, vergeblich nach einem Opfer umsehen würde. Die letzten unter den Leimgängern aber würden unzweifelhaft unsere modernen Orgons, unsere heutigen reichen Privatleute sein. . . . Noch bis diesen Tag sah ich nichts lieber als Harlekinaden, aber ich will dann auch Harlekin und Colombine direkt vor mir haben und meinen Freund Pierrot auf dem Zettel sehen. Davon sind wir hier aber weit ab. Alle Molière'schen Komödien werden naturalistisch angesehen und recht eigentlich als Charakter-Stücke gespielt; sie sind es aber nicht mehr, wenn sie's auch vordem waren. Es sind jetzt Sittenbilder aus einer anderen Zeit."

Had the possibility of a new independent ideal for comedy, considered in 1871, amounted to a permanent conviction

[1] *V. Z.* Feb. 15, 1885, B 1.

with Fontane, the suggestion would probably have been repeated in the later report. Fontane chose at times to compare the criticism in hand with an earlier expression of opinion on the same play, and on the basis of such comparison to confirm or renounce the original point of view. There are obvious reasons for following such a method here, had he wished to emphasize again the recommendation of a new law for comedy of the Molière type. The belief in the privilege of the real artist to be answerable in large measure to independent laws is in itself in keeping with Fontane's conviction that art as the variable fruit of varying conditions is not conformable to permanent limitations. It is in accordance, too, with his tendency to welcome novelty as an indication of fresh spontaneity in art rather than to reject it on the mere ground of departure from tradition. Instead, however, of repeating in the report on "Tartuffe" the theory of a possible new ideal for comedy, he emphasizes again not only the excellence of Molière's art but also the unnatural element in characters and situations. This is not chance, but significantly in keeping with Fontane's increasing demand for *life* in the drama. He still recognizes the masterhand of Molière, but he recommends the play, because of its lack in reality, for reading rather than for the stage.

Fontane recognized even in his London period the inferiority of that type of comedy that depends for its appeal upon situation. He pronounced "Comedy of Errors" the weakest of all the performances he saw in the Sadler's Wells Theater, a verdict the grounds of which we are left at this time to surmise. The general excellence which he notes in the performances of this theater points, however, to the probability that the lack that he felt in this case was at least in part inherent in the play, and a later criticism tends only to substantiate this conclusion. He writes of it (1879) that the spectator's interest lags from the second act on, that Acts II and III have moments of comic effect, but that the comic element is on the whole falsely calculated, since the audience does not, according to expectation realize with

unfailing promptness the mistaken address.[1] The use of disguise as a factor in the production of comic situation Fontane treats but slightly. He does not mention it in his Shakspere criticism; on "As you Like it" there is no report; in "Merchant of Venice" it is the study of Shylock that interests him above all else;[2] in "Twelfth Night" it is the interpretation of Malvolio; the most specific word that he has to say in regard to Viola has to do with the necessity of letting the roguish element come into its own beside the element of sentiment.[3]

Although the treatment of situation for situation's sake is, then, for Fontane, except in farce, a violation of the vital principle of harmony between method and material, he lays, nevertheless, the greatest weight upon adequate attention in comedy to situations that make in themselves an integral part of the dramatic plan. With the use of skilful motivation the situation is, indeed, to the scene what the scene is to the play. "Nichts klingt aus" is a frequent note in Fontane criticism. Upon this shortcoming in Wilbrandt's "Die Maler" he bases the assertion (1872) that the author has misused for the purpose of comedy attractive material adapted to narrative and therefore incapable of enlisting the sympathies of the spectator when compressed within the narrow limits demanded by the stage.[4] The fact that he substantiates this statement ten years later,[5] comparing the play with its series of "atelier anecdotes" to a "dinner menu of ten courses from the same basic ingredients," removes all doubt that his reason in the beginning for pronouncing this material for narrative was that it provided only situations interesting in themselves with no regard for the principles of cause and effect and climax, essential to organic

[1] *V. Z.* Jan. 3, B 2; cf. for the earlier statement W, 2, VIII, 557.

[2] Cf.: W, 2, VIII, 5 f. (1872); *V. Z.* Feb. 22, 1881, B 1; *V. Z.* 1885, Mar. 20, B 1.

[3] Cf.: W, 2, VIII, 21 ff. (1884), 323 f. (1888); *V. Z.* Feb. 26, 1884, B 1; *V. Z.* Apr. 15, 1887, No. 173.

[4] *V. Z.* Oct. 23, B 2.

[5] W, 2, VIII, 230 f.

unity in drama. The so-called "moderns" as a group, indeed, impress him with an extreme lack of appreciation of harmonious, natural movement. They seem to him to reckon wilfully upon the temporary interest of the uncritical public in the unexpected, since they use both situations and scenes apparently for temporary effect. He writes in his criticism of Gensichen's "Die Märchentante" (1881) that no one has courage any more to let things develop fully on the stage; the "war-cry" has come to be "avoid being tedious at all costs" and often with very doubtful result, since the spasmodic treatment resorted to is productive of an unrest in the spectator that is worse than ordinary ennui.[1]

This same play by Gensichen affords, furthermore, an instance, typical — although unusual in kind — of the whole class of playwrights lured by the desire to obtain what Fontane calls Scribe effects. Gensichen attempts here to develop by tableau "in Sleeping Beauty style" the transference of the hero's love from one cousin to the other. Fontane does not charge Scribe with making a mere picture or momentary vision serve at any point for dialog and action. He does not mention Scribe in this criticism; but the character of Gensichen's attempt, the absolute disregard of motivation, if necessary in order to reach the desired end, the protection that he may have thought to procure from the title for such technical license, and the emotional appeal of his play necessarily recall Fontane's charge against "Les doigts de fée": that the material, treated consistently in fairy-tale fashion, would have been charming, but that title alone cannot convince the spectator that the whole was conceived primarily as a genuine fairy-play rather than as one of actual human experience, that as a reflection of life and the conditions of the time it is not acceptable.[2] Fontane's impression from the plays is the same: that the suggestion of the supernatural in the title is resorted to as a subterfuge; in the case of Gensichen, to cover escape from a technical difficulty; in that of Scribe, to conceal the fact that the social problem involved was beyond his ability.

[1] W, 2, VIII, 287 f. [2] W, 2, VIII, 112 ff. (1871).

In the work of serious dramatists who do not as a rule regard motivation arbitrarily, Fontane terms the failure to develop situations at times an error in tempo. In developing the conflict in Hero's soul, for instance, Grillparzer does not, in Fontane's opinion (1881), show the same fine dramatic instinct as in the initial conception of that conflict. The awakening of Hero's love is given complete treatment in the development, at the expense of the priestess, although it is Hero the priestess that demands a larger part in the conflict in order to make the character at all points psychologically true,[1] and thus attain the end practically promised in the introduction of the idea of priesthood, in itself fruitful of dramatic situation, into a material originally strictly lyric.[2]

Fontane's most interesting reference to false tempo in the working out of a plot occurs (1889) in his analysis of the weakness of Ibsen's "The Lady from the Sea." His point of view is this:[3] Ibsen has conceived Ellida not merely as a sensitive woman obsessed by an illusion but as a noble and courageous character, capable both of reason and of appreciating what is true; her sudden "leap" into appreciation of her husband at the magic word "freedom" is therefore abnormal, although technically a "leap in the right direction" and consequently not in this respect in the same category with the "hin und her" tendency of many "moderns"; the rescue of Ellida from the idea of the Northman should have been developed logically to the end by dialog as it is begun in Act IV in the masterly scene in which Dr. Wangel attempts to lead her by reason to a normal mental state; but Ibsen's mania for exploiting the idea of the genuinely moral marriage based upon individual freedom dulls in this case the dramatist's usually keen sense for natural psychological treatment, and renders the conversation referred to merely a brilliant episode in the completed drama; the weakness is not due, as in many contemporary German play-

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 14, B 1 (criticism of "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen"; cf. also below, p. 131).

[2] W, 2, VIII, 106 f. (1874).

[3] W, 2, VIII, 195 ff.

wrights, to a general lack of motivation, but to sudden and undue prominence in Act IV of a problem which should remain only a part of the mere background if Ellida is to grow naturally into full self-realization; as a result the drama assumes unnecessarily too much the character of a mere problem-play.

Mistaken *tempo* bears, then, through the lack of motivation from which it results, evident relation to that capricious or arbitrary use of situation which is always to Fontane an artistic sacrifice not to be counterbalanced by any advantage. Such a flaw entails nowhere, however, more detrimental results than in the crucial moment of the dénouement. Always an indication of the embarrassment due to exigency, it is here capable of blurring completely the artistic appeal of an otherwise successful play. The psychological truth and delicacy secured by Gutzkow through the use of the unwritten sheet as the gravitating center of the plot in "Ein weisses Blatt" is sacrificed in the last scene through the sudden and melodramatic shifting of brides[1] (1872). After declaring the second act of Lindau's "Verschämte Arbeit" superior (1880) to most acts produced in German drama in a year, placing the annual output in round numbers at a thousand plays, he charges Lindau with seeking a hasty refuge from difficulties at the end in order to adjust all elements satisfactorily.[2] Similarly, in the last act of "Hans Lange"

[1] Fontane writes concerning this conclusion (*V. Z.* Apr. 7, B 4; supplementary to W, 2, VIII, 143): "Das ist ein Schluss den kaum das Lustspiel erlaubt; das Schauspiel gewiss nicht. Ein bis dahin das ganze Stück sehr angenehm beherrschender Zug der Feinheit, geht dadurch im letzten Momente wieder verloren. Und dennoch wäre dem ohne sonderliche Mühe abzuhelfen gewesen. Einfach dadurch, dass der Dichter den ganzen Hochzeitsapparat gestrichen, und das, was sich hier als ein sich unmittelbar Vollziehendes gibt, als ein Werdendes in die Zukunft gestellt hätte."

[2] The theme of this play, as in Scribe's "Les doigts de fée" (W, 2, VIII, 112 ff.), is that self-maintenance through honest work is not degrading to any rank. Fontane's praise of Act II in Lindau's play (*V. Z.* Oct. 26, 1880, B 2) is based especially upon the scene in which by simple conversation between Martha Geissler and Zacharias Gerhardt Martha's nobility, unselfishness, and fineness of feeling are naturally and beauti-

Heyse transforms the real people he has created into puppets, that they may serve the arbitrary idea of reconciliation[1] (1882). Wilbrandt's "Jugendliebe" (1886), too, full of indisputable charm up to the solution, lacks at that point the invention necessary to make it an artistic unit.[2]

Adequate treatment of situation does not, however, involve necessarily length or space. Fontane says that the brevity of the last scene of "Jugendliebe" is advantageous; Wilbrandt's error lies in the fact that it is brevity of the wrong kind. The dramatic economy with which Act III closes in Erckmann-Chatrian's "Die Rantzau" Fontane terms (1883) a flash of genius:[3] It is the scene in which the stubborn pride of Johann Rantzau yields to solicitude for his daughter, and he goes as a suppliant for reconciliation to the house of the brother he has wronged. In Fontane's opinion the usual dramatist would have woven a conversation about the meeting of the two brothers, but it is a truer dramatic instinct which, in the moment of tension when the two stand at the door face to face at last after long years of estrangement, lets the silence suffice, followed by the simple words: "Komm herein." Fontane had written (1881) that situations make a play,[4] and it is to such skilful use of situation as this, about which his entire praise of "Die Rantzau" centers, that this unelaborated but unequivocal statement must refer.

fully revealed in contrast to the ambition and false pride of Gerhardt's daughter Isabella. In the last scene, criticized by Fontane, an involved situation is set to rights with kaleidoscopic swiftness at a place no more probable than the minister's ball, through the minister's recognition of the embroidered purse presented to him by Isabella as the work of Martha Geissler, a discovery followed by his open suit to Martha, who had loved him in secret, after her humiliation by another suitor because she had worked for pay, and the simultaneous chagrin of Isabella, whose own ambitious hopes are thus thwarted.

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 18, B 1.

[2] *V. Z.* Oct. 29, No. 506, Abendausgabe.

[3] *V. Z.* Feb. 9, B 1.

[4] *V. Z.* May 5, B 1. — The statement occurs in praise of the general use of situation in Lindau's "Verschämte Arbeit" (cf. above, p. 64).

But this principle of economy, so desirable in the treatment of dramatic situation, cannot be applied to humor. The breadth of humor in the scenes of Pistol, Silence, and Shallow ("Henry IV"), those of Fluellen and Macmorris, of Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol ("Henry V") is one of the grounds on which Fontane bases his assertion (1873) that "Henry V" and Part II of "Henry IV" are not inferior to Part I of "Henry IV," as stage plays.[1] Falstaff himself he recognizes as inferior in Part II, "Henry IV," to the Falstaff of Part I, but he is inclined to place less value than most critics upon the Falstaff role in sustaining humor in these dramas, more value upon the better minor figures that make for a humorous appeal. With the exception of a few capital scenes

[1] This opinion is based directly upon consecutive performances of these histories in the spring of 1873 (cf. W, 2, VIII, 10–17). One factor in Fontane's conclusion is, no doubt, the following: that Döring's Falstaff (Part I, "Henry IV") appeals to him as brought to perfection; that the same actor's Falstaff (Part II) is inferior to that of Part I, and that Oberländer's Shallow is to Fontane the "crown" of this second evening (*V. Z.* Mar. 27, B 2, additional to W, 2, VIII, 11 ff.). He writes, however, of Part II: "Es führt deshalb irre, wenn der Witz beider Stücke lediglich an dieser einen Gestalt gemessen werden soll; man muss vielmehr den humoristischen Gesamtgehalt gegeneinander abwägen, und so gewogen bleibt es immerhin fraglich, ob nicht die Schale vielleicht zu gunsten des zweiten Teiles sinkt. Pistol und die Friedensrichter Stille und Schaal sind drei Gestalten, die dem Teil II ein sehr Erhebliches an Witz und Humor zulegen. An mehr denn einer Stelle ziemlich ersichtlich auf Kosten Falstaffs."

The other ground for superiority in Part II lies in the historic figures; in Fontane's opinion Percy is almost balanced by Archbishop Scroop, and any possible deficit in the latter is more than outweighed by the great death-scene of the King in Act IV. He does not argue a corresponding excellence for "Henry V." The play is to him "ein ewiges Stück Menschentum," due to the excellence of the Shaksperean conception of Henry V; but he agrees with Oechelhäuser that the successful presentation of this drama is largely dependent upon conditions; he quotes from Oechelhäuser as follows (*V. Z.* Apr. 22, B 2, additional to W, 2, VIII, 13 ff.): "Die dramatische Composition dieses Stücks ist vielfach und mit recht angegriffen worden. Die Handlung hat keine spannenden Verwickelungen; der Höhepunkt erscheint nicht als ein dramatischer, sondern als ein historischer Moment, nach dessen Ueberschreitung die Handlung unmittelbar zum Schluss eilt."

which he does not enumerate he considers the part of Falstaff eminently a role to be read; it offers to his mind a surplus of wit (Geist), some of which belongs distinctly to another century, and much of which is past before it can be fully comprehended by the spectator. Fontane's purpose here is, however, rather to do neglected justice to secondary roles than to underestimate the wit of Sir John, which he characterizes (in Part I) as fresh, effervescent, inexhaustible. He is arguing for appreciation of the humorous whole (den humoristischen Gesamtgehalt), revealing as he does it, a suggestion of dissatisfaction at having failed to follow to its limits each rapidly succeeding eddy of Sir John's exuberant spirit.

This judgment of Falstaff's humor, repeated in a later criticism of "Henry V" (1877),[1] cannot but recall Fontane the *causeur*, the man who was wont to stand for an hour or more

[1] The two ideas, of undue brevity and of separation from our own time, occur in both criticisms side by side. Fontane wrote in 1873 (W, 2, VIII, 17): "Ein ungeheurer Ueberschuss von Geist ist vorhanden, den man lesend bewundert, der aber, gespielt und gesprochen, nur sehr teilweise zur Wirkung kommt. Dass die verschiedenen Jahrhunderte ausserdem ziemlich verschieden darüber empfinden, was eigentlich witzig und komisch sei, möchten wir nur noch angedeutet haben." In 1877 (*V. Z.* May 10, B 1; criticism of Henry IV, Part II) he wrote again of the superiority in some respects of the country-judges Silence and Shallow. It is to be noted again, however, that Oberländer took the part of Shallow, that Fontane pronounced the part excellent, adding that it was perhaps Oberländer's best role, that Falstaff, on the other hand, was a guest role by a Mr. Müller, of whom Fontane wrote simply that he was more original than in Part I (cf. above, p. 22). Yet it is also to be remembered that Fontane's judgment of a drama *per se* never depended largely upon the nature of the performance he had seen. Accustomed to presentations that fell short of his ideal, he was wont to base his criticism of the drama in question primarily upon his own conception of it. The point that he emphasized against Falstaff in this latter report was the element of antiquity in his humor. "Er liest sich besser, als er sich sieht; er ist für uns zu einer Buchfigur geworden. Inmitten aller Bewunderung werden wir seiner, wenn er leibhaftig vor uns tritt, doch nicht recht froh; er heimelt uns nicht an, es ist etwas Fremdes zwischen ihm und uns, und dies Fremde wurzelt in dem Gefühl des Altmodischen, des Antiquirten. . . . Vieles trifft gleichgiltig oder gar störend unser Ohr, und erst im Momente des Verklingens besinnen wir uns, dass es ungeheuer witzig war. . . . Was von der Shakespeare Sprache so oft

with his hand on the door-knob after a cup of tea at the house of a congenial literary friend, the narrator who assembles at summer-resorts and in drawing-rooms a greater number of brilliant conversationalists than one is likely to find together in similar places in real life. Considered thus, it throws light, too, upon the distinction that Fontane draws frequently between dramatic and narrative material. As he discards for dramatic purposes material which does not lend itself to the production of tension, so he makes no place in drama for dialog so finely pointed that the spectator's interest in the sum total must yield temporarily at least to the effort to lose none of the repartee. In narrative, on the contrary, it is dialog, not plot, that seems to give ultimate value to Fontane. In his own work he dispenses frequently with a central line of tension, gives little place to continued narrative or analysis by the author, and lets his characters talk, revealing themselves, their milieu, and the emotional changes that serve to carry on the slowly woven web of plot. It is not unlikely that the latent predilection for unusual art in individualistic dialog and brilliant repartee that manifested itself much later in Fontane's stories of Berlin life was a factor in forming his opinion (1873–1877) of Falstaff's humor and its adaptation to reading rather than to the stage. A similar idea occurs (1875) in the statement that subtlety cannot be substituted for humor in comedy, and his attendant praise of the French *Causeries* for the fact that their comic element gains clearness and support through close relation to situation.[1] He writes also (1877) of Ernst Eckstein's "Ein Pessimist,"[2] which the author calls a comedy, that it is rather a preliminary sketch, that it lacks the freedom and the breadth necessary for humor. "Ohne Breite kann aber der Humor nicht bestehen. Nur der Witz ist kurz."

gesagt worden ist, dass sie neben dem Höchsten und Grössten, neben einem die Zeiten Ueberdauernden, auch etwas in der Zeit Befangenes und Hinfälliges habe, gilt nicht minder auch von seinem Humor." He wrote elsewhere in the criticism: "In Schaal und Stille ist nichts veraltet."

[1] W, 2, VIII, 286.

[2] *V. Z.* Jan. 27, B 1.

In the criticism of tragedy the discussion of situation yields naturally to the consideration of tragic guilt and the consistent portrayal of the protagonist. Moreover, various as are the indications that this branch of drama must deal, too, with human beings, with that which is possible in human experience, the basic demand[1] is not in tragedy as in comedy that it conform to reality; tragedy must elevate; it cannot be divorced from the ideal; it must build upon the fundaments of justice, atonement, and harmony.[2]

Fontane's treatment of tragedy shows, too, that his assertion on occasions that method is more important than material can by no means be taken at its full face-value. Method is, to be sure, prominent here. His adverse criticism[3] of Halm's "Der Fechter von Ravenna" (1879), for example, is based on the mediocre character of the initial material, and the trend of the discussion is that a real poet such as Kleist can give substance to what in itself is nothing, as Shakspere animated the spiritless fundamentals of Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth. Yet, as compared with comedy, the limitations placed in tragedy upon the dramatist's choice of material are much more definite and detailed.

The first of these specific demands is a character that arouses sympathy, and if the tragic hero is perfectly conceived, the sympathetic response that he calls forth is purely for the human soul in conflict. The introduction of cross purposes, the attempt to arouse sympathy at the same time for a cause, blurs the image and decreases the tragic appeal. The mediocre success of Kruse's "Wullenwever" Fontane attributes[4] (1872) to a lack of organic unity between the double interest aroused by the hero as a man and as a reformer. He writes that there are no state conditions sacred

[1] The discussion of dramatic requisites for tragedy is not restricted entirely to tragic genres. Some of the suggestions, meant apparently for general application, reach into the precinct of the spectacular play, just as many of the principles relating to comedy were not limited to comedy.

[2] W, 2, VIII, p. 206.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 130 ff. — Kleist treats the same basic material in "Die Hermannsschlacht."

[4] *V. Z.* Oct. 16, B 2.

in themselves; that Wullenwever had every right to overthrow the patriciate, to expel the papal adherents, and to establish a Danish peasant-kingdom, if he had been a man to compel conditions; but that, lacking this ability, he fails to inspire us with positive sympathy. Fontane's objection [1] to "Herodes und Mariamne" (1874) is based on the ground that Hebbel works at variant purposes in the central figures; they become bearers of his own extreme modern ideas in regard to tyrannic, egoistic love and its unselfish counterpart, yet they show an intensity and enormity of passion in keeping only with the period in history to which they belong. The hero of Spielhagen's "Liebe für Liebe" (1875) is regarded by Fontane as a questionable figure for the center of dramatic conflict,[2] one of the hybrid conceptions (Mischcharaktere) against which he directs repeated thrusts. "Das Drama aber ist der Schauplatz für ein Entweder-Oder." For this reason Wallenstein is in Fontane's opinion (1878) poorly adapted to drama; one does not know whether to sympathize with this hero or to despise him.[3]

The second specific demand for drama, that the conflict be inherent in the opposing characters, Fontane finds admirably illustrated in Otto Ludwig's "Der Erbförster" (1879), and to such a degree that the spectator has from the beginning the foreboding of inevitable evil.[4] Tragic simplicity and directness result in part here from the given material; the limitations of interest and ideas, he points out, are necessarily those of domestic tragedy and stand in close relationship to the fate which seems inevitably bound up in the characters themselves. The fact that he notes in "Das Friedensfest" also (1890), although he considers this a "*study* of life" rather than a drama, and in Helene of "Vor Sonnenaufgang" (1889), that oneness of character and conflict [5] which he found lacking in Wullenwever, Herodes, Mariamne,

[1] W, 2, VIII, 152 ff.
[2] W, 2, VIII, 208 ff.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 73; (report on "Die Piccolomini".)
[4] W, 2, VIII, 148 ff.
[5] W, 2, VIII, 308–313.

and Wallenstein, indicates the belief that material in which the conflict arises unavoidably from the *milieu* is particularly adapted to the production of such tragic unity.

With perfect consistency Fontane holds the same principle in connection with tragic guilt; it cannot be arbitrary; it must have its source in character. Koberstein's failure [1] to develop retribution in "König Erich XIV" from its real dramatic cause results in what Fontane terms (1871) "keine Tragödie, sondern nur eine Criminalgeschichte aus der Oberschicht der Gesellschaft." The play might have been a real tragedy, in his opinion, had Koberstein given full dramatic value to the great scene at the end of Act II, in which Erich, to test the loyalty of Magnus, demands that he sign the death-sentence of John, Duke of Finland. Instead, however, of placing the tragic climax here, he has Magnus swoon in the act of signing, and the scene becomes a mere bubble. Erich, after another whole act, murders Magnus, proved traitor, in self-defense, and falls a victim finally to the ensuing rebellion. Under the manipulation of the dramatist, the historic tyrant is thus really deprived of guilt. There is a similar criticism (1879) of Massinger's method of treating guilt in "The Duke of Milan." [2] "Er schweift ab, er verwirrt sich und verliert das Ziel." The last three acts do not fulfil the promise of the first two, because the dramatist operates in the last half of the play with two motifs. The Duke should perish through his egoistic love for Marcella. Instead, what is technically here a secondary guilt is introduced in the traditional motif of the deserted mistress, and the catastrophe is developed by means of this guilt, which is not only further in the past but dramatically the more obscure. Again, Wildenbruch's "Harold" shows (1882) that extreme disregard for consistent, true motivation that Fontane criticized so severely in the contemporary writers of German comedy. He says of "Harold": [3]

"Es fehlt an wirklichen in den Charakteren gegebenen Konflikten, und was Konflikt sein soll, ist nur eine durch Kontradiktionen eines

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 25, B 2. [2] *V. Z.* Nov. 25, B 2. [3] W, 2, VIII, 260.

kindischen alten Königs herbeigeführte Konfusion. Es fehlt all das, aus dem heraus sich grosse Geschicke zu vollziehen haben. Es ist weder eine tragische Schuld da, noch das Walten eines über Zufall und Laune hinauswachsenden Schicksals. . . ."

It seems to Fontane not sufficient, however, that the dramatic conflict have vital relation to the character involved, unless the human problem in question is strong enough to dominate other inherent weakness in the material. Wildenbruch's "Der Fürst von Verona" suffers less from the confusion of forces leading to Selvaggia's death than from the fact that the main conflict is too far removed from contemporary interest [1] (1887). It is the recurrent demand for realism that will appeal to the modern spectator that manifests itself here, that demand to which interest in historical background was wont to yield in Fontane. The criticism is not out of touch with his estimate of Falstaff's humor as antiquated, and it recalls distinctly the report on "Minna von Barnhelm" (1870) in which he expresses the opinion that in spite of great life and freshness this play fails in universal appeal because too clearly stamped with the characteristics of the era it portrays.[2]

Fontane's discussion of the problem-play gives evidence, however, that he developed in the course of his criticism the conviction that restrictions often placed somewhat arbitrarily by himself and others on the choice of material should be made conditional upon method. A letter to Mr. Fritsch (1894) indicates [3] that he had been inclined earlier to take a radical stand against the exploitation of problems in drama,

[1] W, 2, VIII, 264 ff.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 32 ff.

[3] W, 2, XI, 315 f. — This letter was called forth by a discussion of "Philotas" in an evening company. Mr. Fritsch (later Fontane's son-in-law) had expressed the opinion that "Philotas" was not valued according to its deserts. Fontane, after re-reading the play, took issue with this opinion. With reference to his own position on general mooted questions in literature, he wrote: "Sie kennen mich zu gut, als dass Sie nicht wissen sollten, dass der ganze streitsuchende Krimskrams von Klassizität und Romantik, von Idealismus und Realismus, beinahe möchte

but that he is convinced that it is method that acquits or condemns. He condemns "Philotas" here for its academic character and its consequent lack of convincing power. Yet every worthy material seems to involve in his opinion a certain degree of problem treatment. He wrote (1880) that real art could not exist without the expression of a beautiful human thought.[1]

His treatment of the problem in drama and the relation of material to method in its use centers definitely, in the discussion of three special genres: the drama presenting a moral truth in the manner of the fairy-tale; the drama built upon a social problem; the drama treating a patriotic theme with a background of history.

The dramatized fairy-tale provides fruitful soil for the cultivation of a moral, if poetic atmosphere is not lacking. But the method that fails to recognize the poetry inherent in material that is genuine legend or of legendary type sacrifices the force of the truth to be expressed. In his report[2] on Wichert's "Der Freund des Fürsten" (1879) Fontane misses "the elves, those gracious, arrogant little creatures that disarm criticism." On the other hand, Raimund's "Der Verschwender" shows him (1874) in spite of the inadequacy of its fairies and the abundance of its platitudes, that it was conceived in a poetic soul;[3] "this shadelike beggar, conjured up, as it were, from out of the future," and reappearing before the fugitive like his shadow or like fate itself at moments

ich auch sagen, von Tendenz und Nichttendenz — denn einige der allergrössten Sachen sind doch Tendenzdichtungen — weit hinter mir liegt. *Alles* ist gut, wenn es gut ist."

[1] W, 2, VIII, 242 f. — The criticism is based upon Paul Lindau's "Gräfin Lea." Fontane takes the position that the play is of a higher order, and that it is unreasonable to condemn it on the ground that Lindau's treatment of the Jewish question has less depth and less elevation than that of Lessing in "Nathan" since it was not Lindau's primary purpose to treat a problem.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 213.

[3] Both reports on "Der Verschwender" referred to are found W, 2, VIII, 102–105.

increasingly dramatic, grips the human heart as powerfully, to Fontane's mind, in spite of the "fantastic-sentimental" background, as does the figure of Banquo in the realm of the awful, the "fantastically exalted." He expresses satisfaction (1886) in the possession of Raimund, for whom "this poor world is full of marvel" as the outward expression of a higher power. He attributes (1878) the strong appeal of Calderon's "Life a Dream" to the poetic treatment of the moral with vital force in the drama, in comparison with which the lesson of "Der Traum ein Leben" seems to him a mere appendage.[1] Yet he writes of the latter (1884)[2] — and without forgetting its relation to the Spanish play — that it has strong ethical and educational power, that the "better part" so often preached in empty phrases is here felt. "Es gibt weniges, was so rührt und erheitert, so hinnimmt und entzückt wie gute Märchen."

The justification of the problem by method is nowhere clearer, however, than in Fontane's treatment of the social problem-play, which centers in his discussion of the best products of the German naturalistic period. Here general excellence of method attains in his opinion unusual artistic success in spite of some errors of detail, and in spite of material, the adaptation of which to artistic purposes may sometimes be questioned.

It must be noted at the outset, however, that Fontane himself never uses the term social problem-play. That he classified the naturalistic dramas as problem-plays is evident, nevertheless, from the fact that he places Hauptmann's "Weber" in this category.[3] Paul Schlenther had expressed the opinion in print that the importance of "Die Weber"

[1] *V. Z.* Dec. 14, B 3.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 109 f. — That Fontane must have had in mind here the relation of Grillparzer's play to its Spanish predecessor is to be concluded from the fact that this is one of the reports in which he refers to what he had written on the same subject at an earlier date (Dec. 12, 1878).

[3] Cf. W, 2, XI, 325–327 (including footnote).

like that of "Nathan der Weise" depended not upon its "Tendenz," but upon its art, its literary greatness. Fontane shows in a letter to Brahm (Sept. 27, 1894) his approval of Schlenther's position, although he admits that the Hauptmann play may be open to blame; a letter of the following day to Schlenther himself indicates no little pleasure in the fact, likely, Fontane says, to be regarded by some as "high treason," that Schlenther had placed the Hauptmann play in juxtaposition with that of Lessing.

It is noticeable, further, that Fontane shows no opposition here, as elsewhere,[1] to the purpose-element as such. Whatever disapproval he expresses of the work of the German naturalists is on the basis of some esthetic shortcoming in material. For this reason alone he withholds from "Vor Sonnenaufgang" unrestricted praise. One must surmise in part as to Fontane's failure to take exception to the emphasis placed upon the problem-element here. That its prominence did not escape him is evident from his reference to Alfred Loth as a rider of hobbies and to the drama as a "Schnapstragödie."[2] That he does not regard this element as ultimately detrimental to the convincing power of the drama, as in the case of "Ghosts," is the probable explanation for lack of censure. He feels that one's realistic sense cannot doubt either the conditions portrayed in "Vor Sonnenaufgang" or the existence side by side of all forces making for and against these conditions.[3] He does not make any defi-

[1] In some miscellaneous cases he considers the problem-factor in itself a distinct drawback to artistic results. In "Herodes und Mariamne" there is a lack of human truth (1874) because the nature of the problem introduced is not in keeping with the historic setting. There is lack of organic unity between the problem and the characters who develop it. In "Uriel Acosta" a similar lack of inner unity renders the hero unconvincing and weakens the stamp of historic truth (1879). Fitger's "Von Gottes Gnaden" is without a vestige of real human truth (1890) because too evidently constructed around the purpose of questioning divine right of class and of defending the human right of woman. (Cf. W, 2, VIII, 152 f., 145, 246 f.)

[2] Fontane uses also the older term "Komödie" (Schnapskomödie). Cf. report on "Die Familie Selicke," Apr. 7, 1890 (W, 2, VIII, 313).

[3] W, 2, VIII, 300 f., 308 f. (Oct. 20, 1889); cf. also W, 2, VII, 232.

nite statement to this effect, but he writes of "Vor Sonnenaufgang" as follows:

"Eine sonderbare, eine gruselige Geschichte. Überall im Lande haben wir jetzt Gegenden, wo Bauern und mitunter blose Kätner über Nacht reich geworden sind, und in eine solche Gegend führt uns das Stück."

Even more important in this connection is his characterization of Helene:

"Heftig, herbe, leidenschaftlich und zugleich doch weich und schmiegsam und von einer edlen Sehnsucht nach Wahrheit, Frieden, und Liebe verzehrt; dazu Bauernkind und Säufertochter mit herrnhutischer Erziehung, welche letztere nicht bloss obenauf liegen blieb, sondern ihr ins Herz drang."

One must conclude from the tenor of his reports on "Ghosts" [1] that he could not take a similar stand in regard to it; the burden of evidence there is for the verdict that coincident conditions in this drama, although not impossible, are made contiguous for the sake of enforcing the thesis in question.

Fontane's initial position (1887) in regard to "Ghosts" is that the theses are false. The impression that the first published criticism makes upon the reader is, however, that he cannot fully explain why the drama fails to satisfy his esthetic sense. In a letter to Schlenther of the same date, without rejecting the theses themselves, he notes the "pretentious

[1] Fontane's criticisms of "Ghosts" are found W, 2, VIII, 180–189, under dates of Jan. 8, 1887 and Sept. 30, 1889. The first date is erroneous. The performance was advertised Sunday, Jan. 9, *V. Z.* noon-edition, B 3, as a matinée for that date in the Residenz theater. Fontane's 1887 criticism is not printed in *V. Z.* of this or the following date. The Monday edition, Jan. 10, contains a report on the performance in the Residenz theater, signed P. S. (Paul Schlenther), reporter for the Residenz theater. The letter to Schlenther referred to bears the date Jan. 9, 1887. It expresses thanks for Schlenther's kindness in making it possible for Fontane to enjoy the performance, also the desire "etwas über dies merkwürdige Stück zu sagen," and refers to the possibility of appearing in the "Vossin" some thirty-six or forty-eight hours after Schlenther himself (W, 2, XI, 121 f.).

morality" of "Ghosts," the "extreme pessimism of an eccentric philosophy that is only apparently correct." These words throw light upon a passage which receives no great emphasis in the published criticism:

"Wenn es sicherlich nicht wohlgetan wäre, den Blick gegen unsere Gebrechen und Schwachheit verschliessen zu wollen, so verbietet es sich doch mehr noch, all das, was uns von Schuld und Sünde durchs Leben hin begleitet, unter ein vergrössendes Zerrglas zu tun."

Fontane never relinquishes this position. He writes to Mete [1] (Sept. 14, 1889) that Ibsen pursues even his secondary motifs with a mania which makes them assume for him eventually the importance of major themes, and that in developing them he falls into "phrases,[2] not of word, but of feeling." He cites with evident pleasure both to Mete and to Stephany (Sept. 30, 1889) the opinion of Emil Rittershaus, that Ibsen the apothecary reveals himself in all his works, even expressing his own approval to Stephany as follows: "Überall der kleine, kluge, verrückte Apotheker, der sich weltabgeschieden, in eine furchtbare Frage einbohrt."

He writes of Hauptmann, on the other hand, in the letter to Mete already cited — and the opinion is called forth by reading "Vor Sonnenaufgang" — that he is a "de-phrased" (entphraster) Ibsen. Since Fontane pays to Ibsen's language elsewhere the highest possible tribute, the epithet "de-phrased" has reference here also to feeling, to what Fontane considers an abnormal view of life. In the criticism of the play, written for publication (a month later), he finds it impossible to suggest adequately the tone of the play, the key in which it is written (der Ton in dem das Ganze gehalten ist). Its tone gives the

[1] These letters are found: W, 2, VII, 232 f.; W, 2, XI, 216 ff. The letter to Stephany is the same date as the first performance of "Ghosts" on the Free Stage in Berlin. In Fontane's criticism of this date (W, 2, VIII, 185 ff.) he ascribes to the drama great power of conviction, but it is conviction due to "artistic sincerity," the dramatist's own ardent belief in his theses, rather than to truth inherent in the theses themselves.

[2] Fontane's hatred of the phrase as such is treated under language: cf. below, pp. 134 f.

directness of the ballad and carries with it the ballad-thrill. This is the tone of truth, of which he regards only the genuine poet capable, "the power of which renders inconsequent minor weaknesses, even occasional absurdities."

"Bleibt diese Wirkung aus, übt der Ton nicht seine heiligende, seine rettende Macht, verklärt er nicht das Hässliche, so hat der Dichter verspielt, entweder weil seine Gründe doch nicht rein genug waren und ihm die Lüge oder zum mindesten die Phrase im Herzen sass, oder weil ihn die Kraft im Stich liess und ihn sein Werk in einem unglücklichen Momente beginnen liess."

More than eight years later Fontane writes again to Stephany that "Ibsen may be the stronger personality, the greater nature, superior as an epoch-making genius," but that Hauptmann is the greater poet "because more human, natural, and true." [1]

Yet Fontane's esthetic sense is offended by the tendency of the German naturalistic playwrights to draw exclusively from the ugly for the mass of details with which they round out a dramatic plan. He writes, for instance, even of "Vor Sonnenaufgang," that the very details which had impressed him in the reading as constituting what was distinctive and new in the play appealed to him less forcefully in presentation than the points it shows in common with accepted dramatic traditions. He is therefore convinced (Oct. 1889) that realism, even in its most artistic form, must yield to well-defined stage-laws when it steps from the book out upon the boards.[2] Details of real life, ornamental to the novel, homely though they may be, appear prosaic on the stage when portrayed in modified form, and repulsive when shown in the glaring light of actuality. Similarly (1890) in spite of unmitigated praise

[1] W, 2, XI, 459 f. (letter of Mar. 22, 1898).

[2] W, 2, VIII, 305 f. — Fontane does not discriminate by use of different terms between realism in the broad sense and its extreme phase known as naturalism. This is no doubt due partly to the fact that he gives little heed to technical terms in general. It was due also in part to the fact that he did not have an historical perspective for the phenomenon. The spirit of his criticism shows that he distinguished promptly and clearly between work of realistic and work of naturalistic character.

for "Die Familie Selicke" as an epoch-making play in realistic accuracy, he expresses very definite scruples against the choice of material. As an exceptional case he gives this drama hearty welcome, but not as a norm.[1]

The treatment of the problem is naturally less prominent in the discussion of the historical drama than the question of poetic license in the use of historical fact and the method of adapting facts of historical importance artistically to the dramatic form. Fontane writes that the *Tendenz* may be present if it does not become obtrusive,[2] but sympathy for a cause may not blur the character conception or decrease the human appeal.[3] Nothing is to him more lifeless (nichts Unerquicklicheres) in the hands of a poet unequal to his task than patriotic poetry (vaterländische Dichtung), nothing more refreshing if the poet's power is adequate.[4]

His ideas in regard to the adaptation of historical material in drama have already been indicated along broad lines: that bald historic fact is not sufficient; that the purpose of this type is not to portray cultural conditions; that its value lies in the dramatic conflict and the ethical truth and poetic power with which this conflict is treated.[5]

Certain great models appeal to him as ideals for the genre: "Henry V" for poetical power (1873); "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" for clearness and consistency, the impression of artistic necessity in the development of plot (1876); "Die Piccolomini" [6] for Shaksperean clearness and variety in characterization and for French beauty of form (1878); Laube's "Graf Essex" [7] for technical and structural excellence, espe-

[1] W, 2, VIII, 314 f. — Fontane writes: "*Einmal* geht das, *einmal* lass ich mir das gefallen, sogar unter wärmster und bewundernder Anerkennung gefallen. . . . Um Himmelswillen keine 'Kontinuation'! Ein Punkt, der nicht genug betont werden kann."

[2] *V. Z.* Oct. 31, 1876, B. 3.

[3] Cf. above, p. 118 (criticism of "Wullenwever").

[4] W, 2, VIII, 131 (1879).

[5] Cf. above, p. 42.

[6] For reference to the last three plays cf. W, 2, VIII, 15, 96, 72.

[7] *V. Z.* Dec. 9, B 2; May 15, 1873, B 2.

cially for the artistic use of fact in the dramatic climax (1879); "Götz von Berlichingen"[1] for its harmonious combination of beauty, cultural background, and "historic style," by which Fontane seems to mean realistic and dramatic simplicity in treating human experience and the march of great events (1884).

But it is through Fontane's adverse criticisms that one gets, on the whole, a definite idea of the requirements he would make for adapting historical fact to drama. Although his preference of Laube's Queen Elizabeth to Schiller's conception would indicate a predilection for the method that retains the character of history, this is not a prominent demand in his criticism. He rejects Koberstein's "König Erich XIV" (1871), for instance, not primarily because accuracy is sacrificed, but because the conception is dramatically inconsistent.[2] Again (1883), it is the lack of imaginative ability, of originality, which he sees in Michael Beer's "Struensee" that he defines as deficient historic sense "was in einem historischen Stück nicht viel weniger bedeutet als 'es fehlt an Wahrheit überhaupt.'"[3]

It is evident, indeed, that historic accuracy took rank with Fontane below a number of other considerations. It is secondary to psychological truth (1872) as in Gottschall's portrayal of Katharina Howard.[4] It may yield, as in stage setting, to poetic appeal; the art in Kleist's conception of the Prince of Homburg[5] is eventually convincing (1876) in spite of the violation of historic truth; he defends[6] even more strongly (1888) Heyse's disregard of fact in "Die Weisheit Salomos" on the basis that Heyse uses King Solomon merely as a bearer of the important poetic human truth taken as the theme.

[1] *V. Z.* Apr. 22, B 1.

[2] Cf. above, p. 120.

[3] *V. Z.* Nov. 4, No. 517.

[4] *V. Z.* Mar. 5, B 2.

[5] W, 2, VIII, 96.

[6] Fontane's words on this occasion go so far as to disregard, for the sake of emphasis upon the ideal, the more general principle of realistic portrayal. "Geschichte hin, Geschichte her. Ja, weitergehend, auch der alltägliche Mensch kommt hier nicht in Frage; der wirkliche Arnold von

It is "Die Quitzows" that illustrates in Fontane's opinion the supreme exercise of the faculty of dramatic instinct as to initial choice of historic material, rejection or retention of details, and original additions from the author's imagination.[1] The choice that Wildenbruch makes for his drama from the whole mass of historic narrative evinces to Fontane the infalli-

Melchthal kann seine Betrachtung über den Werth des Auges unmöglich im Schillerstil gehalten haben; was zur Erscheinung gebracht werden soll, ist nicht die Wirklichkeit, sondern das Ideal.

'Alles wiederholt sich nur im Leben,
Ewig jung ist nur die Phantasie,
Was sich nie und nirgends hat gegeben,
Das allein veraltet nie.'

Dieses Schillerschen Worts war Heyse eingedenk und schuf *ein Stück, das weder auf kulturhistorische* Korrektheit, *noch auf Durchschnittswahrscheinlichkeit,* sondern lediglich auf sein poetisches Vollmass, auf Schönheit und Erhebung angesehen sein will. Es nähert sich dadurch, trotz seines historischen *Königs Salomo den Märchenstücken hohen und höchsten Stils.*" Fontane makes this last generalization definite by mentioning "Winter's Tale" and by reference to the work of Calderon and Grillparzer on the basis of "Life a Dream" (*V. Z.* Feb. 19, B 1).

[1] W, 2, VIII, 265 ff. — No less distinguished a critic than Dr. Paul Schlenther takes exception to Fontane's verdict concerning this one of the Wildenbruch dramas. He writes (W, 2, VIII, Vorwort, IX): "Die wenigsten werden Wildenbruchs 'Quitzows' mit ihm so viel höher stellen als Wildenbruch's 'Karolinger.'" Whatever may be one's personal estimate of the completed drama in question, there can be no doubt as to Fontane's ability to judge fairly the dramatic sense of the author in the selection of material for the restricted limits of the dramatic form. Fontane had himself worked through much of the Quitzow material as found in historic narratives for Volume 5 of his "Wanderungen." Letters of 1887 mention interest in the Quitzow chapter of "Fünf Schlösser" which appeared late in Oct. 1888 (cf. Appendix). This material must have been fresh in Fontane's mind when his criticism of Wildenbruch's drama, called forth by the première in Nov. 1888, was written. Fontane's predilection for everything connected with the history of Mark Brandenburg may have given him extraordinarily keen interest in this one of Wildenbruch's works. His personal knowledge of both ballad and narrative sources, his own interest in the possibilities of the ballad as a literary form, his fondness for the old German ballads, and his unrealized desire to write drama himself must, on the other hand, have made him extraordinarily critical also in this case.

bility of the *Quellenfinder*, whose magic rod discovers the spring beneath a barren surface. His creation of the smith's apprentice on the basis of a mere suggestion from a Pomeranian ballad attests, furthermore, an equal degree of imaginative power; Köhne Finke is to Fontane not only a living but a life-giving figure in the drama, and at the same time the incarnation of the folk's longing, of their homely, whimsical humor, and of their loyalty,—an Autolycus of the Mark, with a slight impress of Jack Cade.

That the dramatic instinct and the poetic instinct are for Fontane interrelated has already been clearly suggested at several points; one has only to recall [1] the importance to him of the poetic element in "Der Prinz von Homburg" and "Die Weisheit Salomos" and his comparison of the tone of "Vor Sonnenaufgang" with that of the ballad. It is clear from a number of criticisms, also, that he considers the ability to use the lyric element for dramatic ends not only advantageous but often requisite to true dramatic art. He deplores (1873) the partial omission and partial transformation of the chorus in the Berlin presentation of "Oedipus Rex"; the substitution [2] for it of the peasant's speech after the dread warning of Teiresias seems to him incapable of the same power in suggesting terror; "hier erwartet man das Einfallen einer klanggetragenen lyrischen Strophe." He regards [3] the chorus (1879) in "Die Braut von Messina" as not only the most beautiful part of the drama but the part that takes firmest hold upon the spectator. Grillparzer's perception of the dramatic possibility in the lyric original of the Hero and Leander story is to him a mark of genius [4] (1874); the lyric depth attained by Grillparzer is greater in his opinion than even that of "Die Braut von Messina;" although he holds that Grillparzer has

[1] Cf. below, p. 139.

[2] *V. Z.* Sept. 23, B 2 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 1 ff.) — This presentation followed the translation by Adolf Wilbrandt.

[3] *V. Z.* Jan. 9, B 1. — He had written in 1873 that the chorus in this drama exercised its old power (*V. Z.* May 11, B 4).

[4] W, 2, VIII, 106 ff.; cf. also above, p. 112.

not worked out the dramatic details of Hero's struggle with complete esthetic success, he does not agree with the charge that the lyric element is too prominent. A later criticism [1] of this drama (1881) dwells somewhat at length upon the idea, suggested in connection with "Oedipus Rex," of dramatic effect derived from lyric expression. Fontane writes of the temple-guard's description (in Act IV) of the shadows on the tower-wall:

"Was er da giebt ist nicht nur eine Beschreibung, aber diese Beschreibung ist von einer solchen Macht und höheren poetischen Anschaulichkeit, dass das blosse Wort an die Stelle des Erlebnisses tritt und wir dies nächtlich Geheimnisvolle, das in Spuk und Ahnung Gehüllte wie gegenständlich mit durchzumachen glauben. . . . vielleicht ein Beweis dafür, dass alle grosse poetische Wirkung im Letzten immer auf ein dramatisches Element hinausläuft. Erlkönig und die Lenore haben mich immer hingerissen wie Macbeth, und es giebt Lieder, alte und neue, die vollkommen den Zauber und die Wirkung einer dramatischen Liebesscene haben."

That dramatic instinct is evinced in form is no new idea. Ever since Freytag promulgated his theory of technic the details of external form have served largely as a point of departure for dramatic criticism and analysis. The unusual degree to which esthetic sense predominates in Fontane's criticism over conscious application of any such fixed norm is one of its most distinctive features. This is not to say that the consideration of external form is unusual in his reports. The fact that he does not fail to regard structural outline shows in the distinction he makes between material adapted primarily to narrative and that adapted to drama. Furthermore, as specific examples: Geibel's "Brunhild" gains in his opinion (1872) in presentation because of good detailed motivation and general artistic dramatic plan, whereas the usual fate of the modern tragedy is to lose in its appeal from the stage; [2] in Lindner's "Brutus und Collatinus" the skilful use of the Lucretia story [3] as a mere step in the general plan,

[1] *V. Z.* Oct. 14, B 1.
[2] *V. Z.* June 7, B 2.
[3] *V. Z.* Feb. 23, B 2.

in spite of dramatic possibilities in it equal to those of the Brutus story itself, avoids confusion and an undue division of sympathy (1879); the external flaw of "Herodes und Mariamne" is (1874) that the exposition does not reach far enough into the past;[1] but Act I of "Die Rantzau" is (1883) an "exposition *comme il faut.*"[2] Fontane's conviction in regard to external form is, however, that important as it is, it is capable of being learned or is often practically dictated by the inherent character of the given material. He lays far greater weight, on the whole, upon less tangible factors dependent primarily upon innate esthetic instinct, such as tone, organic unity or internal form, and that sort of dramatic expression by means of which the characters assume life.

Without that indefinable content that Fontane calls worthy tone or sentiment (Gesinnung) no play can have for him complete artistic value. It was a phase of this requisite which to him gave worth to the work of Benedix and Wilbrandt, which was not generally recognized in the case of the former because of attendant lack of style, which was never attained by Scribe and his French followers in spite of their ability in sparkling effects.[3] Tone is that unconscious expression of the spirit of the dramatist that gives character to his work in spite of technical defects, "jenes Endgültige, das zum Guten oder Schlechten scheidet."[4] It is apparently the faculty which makes the dramatist a seer; Ibsen lacked it at times, although what Fontane terms 'artistic sincerity' redeemed the Norwegian's work for him in spite of this deficiency; Hauptmann attained it in "Vor Sonnenaufgang" to a rare degree; Wildenbruch's "Harold" has no value for Fontane because

[1] W, 2, VIII, 154.

[2] *V. Z.* Feb. 9, B 1.

[3] Cf. above, p. 70.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 156. — That this quality alone cannot justify a play for Fontane stands to reason. It is practically the only redeeming feature in Kruse's "Marino Faliero," from a criticism of which the above citation is taken; but the drama, lacking clear, consistent conception of character and external unity also, fails naturally in spite of it (*V. Z.* Dec. 23, 1876, B 2. — additional to 1st reference).

of complete failure in regard to it; Schiller attained it in "Tell" in spite of a certain external unreality.[1]

In the greatest dramas this atmosphere, the material, and the structural plan combine to produce that organic unity the result of which is complete harmony in the constituent parts. The dramatist cannot fail to perceive this inevitable relation between content and form without sacrificing the power of his work. Hauptmann shows in Fontane's opinion (1896) an inconsistency of feeling, a lack of clear, esthetic perception in Act V of "Die versunkene Glocke"; the entire act[2] with the exception of the scene at the well between the Nickelmann and Rautendelein is superfluous and the final return of the bell-maker to the sprite is an annoyance in the esthetic sense (macht verdriesslich). The play, as developed, admits of nothing more than a final tableau after Act IV, showing Rautendelein in resignation at the well, with perhaps some words of the Nickelmann to the satyr, and to her. The conclusion which Hauptmann gives presupposes for Fontane an entirely different structural plan for the entire work.

The element, however, in which esthetic and dramatic instinct unite with real life-giving power is, above all others, language. The external structural outline may be that demanded by the material chosen without effecting the highest artistic result. Complete harmony between the two is realized only in the perfect adaptation of expression to content. The literary artist speaks through Fontane's entire treatment of the esthetic in drama; it is especially through his discussion of language that the human insight of the poet is revealed. Many

[1] Fontane writes of "Harold": "Es ist weder aus klaren noch aus richtigen Anschauungen heraus geboren und trägt insoweit einen ganz modernen Stempel, als es ausschliesslich dem Effekte, nicht aber der Wahrheit dient." He says of "Tell," on the contrary, which he uses to illuminate by contrast the shortcoming of "Harold": "Tell, ein Stück, das einer gewissen Unwirklichkeit seiner Gestalten bezichtigt wird, ich will nicht sagen von allen aber doch von vielen. Und doch wie *wahr* ist alles, gleichviel wie man sich zu der Frage von der Wirklichkeit oder Unwirklichkeit aller darin auftretenden Personen auch stellen mag. (W, 2, VIII, 254 and additional in *V. Z.* Apr. 23, 1882, B 1.)

[2] W, 2, XI, 411 f. (letter to Otto Brahm).

critics base a certain amount of more or less stereotyped commendation or praise upon language. Fontane's treatment is more than ordinarily tangible, and although of necessity piecemeal, like all other branches of his so-called theory, it is surprisingly extensive for the limitations of occasional criticism.

He waged a continuous warfare against unnatural and uninspired language in all its phases, but especially against the pomp and empty imagery of what is frequently termed melodious language (schöne Sprache), "pomphaft aufgebauschte Sätze, verziert mit Bildern, die entweder falsch oder unverständlich sind." [1] His conviction of falseness in Gutzkow's dramatic work rests less on the warped, confused characters which result from arbitrary delineation and inconsistency in detail [2] than from the peccability of his language. Even passages, beautiful in themselves, such as those (1879) in "Uriel Acosta," having to do with the sudden restoration of sight to the blind man and the blossoming of the withered staff, are open to attack, and the speech is in general distorted and misshapen (schief und krumm).[3] Even some of Shakspere's imagery is acceptable to Fontane only on account of the counterbalancing power of other factors in Shakspere's genius.[4] The usual imitation of Shaksperean figure results in what is poetry only to the Philistine; its presence is a flaw among the points of excellence of Lindner's "Brutus and Collatinus"; [5] its absence is an advantage for which Laube and Benedix are commended by Fontane.[6]

But a genuine language of imagery, such as is rare among Shaksperean followers, he finds in Grillparzer and Hebbel, a use of image not as an external ornament, but inseparable

[1] *V. Z.* Feb. 24, 1878, B 3.

[2] Cf. above, p. 94.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 145 f.

[4] W, 2, VIII, 134 f. — From a report on Laube's "Die Karlsschüler," Feb. 19, 1881.

[5] *V. Z.* Feb. 23, 1879, B 2. — Fontane's adverse criticism of Lindner's language is based on its unevenness. He commends it for the excellence of brevity at decisive points, where a single word is often made effective.

[6] Cf. p. 63.

from the thought it adorns, a simultaneous growth with the mysterious secret power of nourishing and sustaining the thought. Such use of image is in itself a distinct factor in dramatic power, as noted in the case of "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen," where the power of poetic language becomes practically a substitute for more ordinary devices for producing dramatic tension. He says in connection with "Die Piccolomini" also that it is not necessary to provide for action by means of poison or dagger, when the "word" itself is made (as here) a source of power.[1]

Similar dramatic tension may be attained through realistic simplicity in language. Fontane attributes the power of "Die Hermannsschlacht" (1875) ultimately to the truth, sincerity, and directness of Kleist's language.[2] He ascribes the superiority of "Die Quitzows" (1888) over Wildenbruch's earlier dramas not only to the dramatist's clever use of historic and legendary suggestion, but to the sound, pithy, vigorous, individualized language of simplicity that triumphs here in large part over Wildenbruch's general tendency to the forced phrase.[3] In "The Lady from the Sea" (1889) the poetic charm of Ibsen's simple language is the chief compensatory means for making conviction banish whatever doubts arise in the spectator's mind in the course of the first acts.[4]

[1] W, 2, VIII, 72 (Nov. 11, 1871).

[2] W, 2, VIII, 92 ff. — Fontane urges glowing patriotism as the emotional motive-power of the drama, rather than the hatred of the enemy, mentioned by Julian Schmidt as dramatic in spite of the esthetic weakness connected with the conquest of the enemy by treachery. Fontane seeks the cause for this hatred in the strong love of the Fatherland that inspires the work, and the reason for the dramatic appeal of the latter emotion in basic truth of conception and simplicity of expression.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 267 f.

[4] *V. Z.* Mar. 6, B 1. — Such doubts connect themselves in Fontane's opinion with Act II, which he says "muthet in seiner Hauptszene dem Zuschauer nach der Seite des . . . physiologisch Mystischen hin, mehr zu, als ihm vielleicht zugemutet werden darf." The scene referred to is that in which Ellida, after telling her husband of her betrothal to a ship-captain before her marriage, confesses that she has been oppressed by the sense of this lover's nearness, and by the likeness to him which she saw in her child.

As the presence of convincing language counterbalances weakness, so its absence renders practically futile factors in themselves essentials for success in drama, such as correct general conception of character and of external outline. This idea of language as a determining element in drama is not original with Fontane. He interprets its power, however, in a new way, making it inseparable from the underlying tone, together with which it gives the impression of sound and harmonious art, since it is truth in language that constitutes what Fontane terms (1873) the dramatist's "poetic technic";[1] in the work of Ibsen, language seems to him further the very material through which the dramatist rears a stable structure to outlines of artistic beauty.

Ibsen's service to the drama Fontane considers (1898) to be above all else the creation of a new language.[2] He does not mean, however, that either the simplicity of Ibsen's language or its realism in the abstract made it epoch-marking. It was not absolutely new, moreover, in its intimate relation to the thought. All these qualities had reached excellence in both Shakspere and Goethe. Ibsen's service to language seems to mean to Fontane something more than the ordinary adaptation of word to situation, character, and thought; it is, rather, the use of dialog as a structural unit through which the whole grows gradually to completeness. In spite of Fontane's high praise of the language employed by Wildenbruch in "Die Quitzows," he incorporates into his criticism (1888) of this drama the statement that Ibsen is a giant as compared with Wildenbruch in the artistic molding of his material, in consistency and accuracy; that perfection of form produces in Ibsen an effect similar to tension, rendering content, as

[1] Fontane writes of Koberstein's "Um Nancy": "Ein gut gegriffenes und gut gebautes, in Charakteren und Motiven mindestens sehr hinnehmbares Stück, das *dennoch* scheiterte. Das scheiterte, weil es ihm, in Gegensatz zu einer ausreichend *geübten Bühnentechnik*, an jener *dichterischen Technik* gebrach, die, mit Hilfe eines wohlgesponnenen, die *richtigen Zeitmaasse haltenden* Dialoges, zwischen den Gegensätzen zu vermitteln . . . weiss" (W, 2, VIII, 226 f., and *V. Z.* Feb. 1, B 2).

[2] W, 2, XI, 465 (letter to F. Stephany, May 17).

in Platen's odes and hexameters, a matter of comparative indifference.[1]

This perfection of form that makes content merely subsidiary can mean only organic harmony. Unity has been from time immemorial a crux of critics. It is clear from this that perfect unity has for Fontane a meaning more subtle than for his predecessors in dramatic criticism, that it involves for him not only conformity to law, but to the sternest dictates of the esthetic sense. It takes unity of action for granted and sets up as its goal an artistic unity in the attainment of which no word, no detail, fails of its purpose.

Although this form-ideal is for Fontane the perfect whole of perfect constituents, he finds adequate completeness possible without perfection in all of the various parts. Through the use of what he terms retroactive power (rückwirkende Kraft) a balance may be established between factors esthetically unequal, which makes eventually for the approximate completeness of the whole. This seems a phase of proportion similar to the compensatory power attributed to poetic language, but not coincident with this. It is at the same time a kind of dramatic or artistic speculation, a risk at one point for a gain at another. Fontane does not consider this principle well reckoned with (1874) in "Herodes und Mariamne," since Mariamne's protestations of blissful love for Herod (Act V) are made too late to counteract the absence of convincing exposition.[2] It works negatively, with destructive force (1872), in the sudden and improbable shifting of brides at the end of Gutzkow's "Ein weisses Blatt"; again (1883) in Wildenbruch's "Die Karolinger" through arbitrary use of improbable incident.[3] It has positive or constructive force[4] in "Christoph Marlowe" (1884) through the development of Marlowe from Act III as the victim of an evil spirit; in "Die Weisheit Salomos" (1888) through the simple triumph of love over all

[1] Cf. above, p. 130, n. 1.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 151 ff.

[3] Cf.: *V. Z.*, Apr. 7, 1872, B 4; W, 2, VIII, 252.

[4] Cf.: W, 2, VIII, 262; *V. Z.* Feb. 19, 1888, B 1; *V. Z.* Jan. 27, 1890, Abendausgabe (additional to W, 2, VIII, 207 f.); W, 2, VIII, 94 ff.

doubts as to historic truth or probability; in Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness" (1890) through the dramatic and ethical power of Act V. It is, however, Kleist's use of the principle in "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" (1876) that impresses him as most skilful. He finds the principle recurrent here, and the consistency, clearness, and unity which the whole plan gains through it not only obliterate early dissonances due to disregard of historic truth but make them appear essential to the unique artistic organism.

This prominence given by Fontane to the principle of retroactive power is one of various indications that his verdicts rest upon the character of the result without stern dictation of method, provided an artistic end is reached. The strongest proof of this lies in his attitude toward the different literary movements or so-called schools. He knew no such sentiment as the eliminating prejudice connected with a name, and to take a fixed position for all time on any question would have been to him unthinkable.[1]

The classic method *per se* occupies comparatively little space in his criticism, but high regard for the salient characteristics of classic style is everywhere apparent. A spirit of deep reverence pervades his report (1873) on "Oedipus Rex," and his enumeration of its points of excellence shows the realization of more ideals than he often found together: impressive material and power in welding it into admirable form; from line to line purity and majesty of expression, free from all bombast and triviality; in the chorus lyric strophes borne along by their own melody; finally, the overwhelming power of inexorable law in the slow chiseling of human fate. The external speaks to him, similarly,[2] with power (1873) in

[1] He wrote to Wilhelm and Henriette v. Merckel from London in 1857 (W, 2, X, 163): ". . . eigensinnig bin ich nie. Ich vernarre mich in nichts, weder in Menschen noch in Dinge, erwäge jeden Augenblick die Chancen der Situation und handle danach." These words, an expression of that objective sense of which he wrote later to Friedländer, had no direct reference to literary criticism; yet they are significant for his entire critical work. (Cf. also W. 2, X, 308; W, 2, VI, Vorwort, XI f.)

[2] W, 2, VIII, 1 f. (also *V. Z.* Sept. 23, B 1), 57 f.

"Oedipus Coloneus." He gives extreme praise to the beauty of "Tasso," to the lyric depth of "Iphigenie" and "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen," indirectly also to the repose and the beauty of line of the French classic drama.[1]

Yet there are repeated evidences that he considered the classic drama ill-fitted to fulfil the mission of the modern stage, — and for two reasons: first, because classic form and style had degenerated in most of the disciples of the great classicists — and especially in the hands of his contemporaries — into a confusion of affectation and false ideality; second, it involved an inherent separation from modern life. As early as 1870, after praise of the national element in "Tell" and the appeal of Heyse's "Colberg" to the Prussian heart, Fontane writes in depreciation of the elevated style: "Alles, was der Sprache unseres modernen Lebens näher steht, glückt besser als der hohe Gang Schiller'scher Verse." He says (1873) in connection with "Tasso" that court and salon plots are circumscribed in appeal by the limitations of time and locality, that greater problems move the modern world, whose interests tend to turn from the exceptional human beings of high station to the human factor of the mass (dem Menschen selber). Although he notes in "The Wild Duck" the absence of the accepted type of tragic exaltation, he is led by the deep truth of this drama and its close relation to life to the conviction, expressed (1888) without direct reference to classic tragedy, that elevation need not be of the traditional sort, that it may be attained through simple submission to the awful supremacy of unfathomable fate.[2]

It is noticeable also that much that Fontane praises even in the classic has close relation to the facts of life. This is illustrated most clearly in the connection he notes between the Greek conception of sin and retribution and that of the naturalistic drama. His idea of the character and place of retribution in tragedy shows early the developing realist in him and in connection with no less ancient of classic plays than "Oedipus Rex" (1873). His scorn of the "worn-out tune of a tooth for a

[1] W, 2, VIII, 106 f., 72.

[2] Cf.: *V. Z.* Aug. 24, B 2 (1870); W, 2, VIII, 58 (1873), 189 ff. (1888).

tooth," the "Klippklappspiel von Schuld und Sühne," as compared with Sophocles' use of inexorable law and the march of destiny is no ordinary recognition of the majesty of the Greek conception of fate. It is also the response of a critic ever alert for greatness and truth in old or new, the recognition that the Greek conception was based upon the effort to understand the eternal mystery of suffering that engulfs the innocent with the guilty. His second important discussion of the subject occurs (1878) in connection with Ludwig's "Erbförster." Here the idea of guilt as a gradual development from small beginnings through the play of daily circumstances upon temperament seems to Fontane natural and true. What many call the arbitrary rule of chance in this drama is to him the mysterious working together of chance details toward a climax that brings both inevitable retribution and innocent suffering in its wake.[1] He writes of "Das Friedensfest" (1890), which he considers a true representation of a daily occurrence, that the situation is not the result of crime or of any irretrievable guilt but grows out of limitations in temperament, stubbornness and lack of control.[2] As late as 1895 he expresses admiration for the gathering of the powers of destiny (Heraufziehen und Einschlagen der Schicksalsmächte) in Ibsen's "Little Eyolf."[3] It is not unusual

[1] Fontane writes: "Was unser Leben bestimmt, sind eben 'Zufälligkeiten,' Ereignisse, deren Gesetz wir nicht klar erkennen. Aber wir ahnen das Gesetz und fühlen in dem sich anscheinend zufällig Vollziehenden den Zusammenhang mit unserem Tun und Lassen heraus. Nicht immer, aber oft. Unser Gutes und unser Böses sind auch hier mittätig, und es besteht ein geheimnisvoller Zusammenhang zwischen unserer Schuld und dem, was wir 'unglücklichen Zufall' nennen. Und derartig sind die Zufälligkeiten dieses Stückes. Es waltet ein Gesetz darin, dass der Erbförster, als er den vermeintlichen Mörder seines Sohnes zu treffen glaubt, statt seiner die eigene Tochter trifft. Und von 'Zufall' ist von dem Augenblick an nicht mehr zu sprechen, da wir alles, was er bringt, als prädestiniert, als eine blosse Frage der Zeit empfinden." (W, 2, VIII, 149 f.)

[2] W, 2, VIII, 311.

[3] W, 2, XI, 335 (letter of Jan. 14 to Otto Brahm). — His reference here is to the end of Act I. The exposition of Allmers' selfish devotion to his work and of Rita's jealous passion for Allmers is followed at the end of Act I by the death of little Eyolf, as by Nemesis.

for the present critics of the German naturalistic tragedy to point out the similarity in respect to form of the tragedy based upon Ibsen to the Greek tragedy of fate. Dr. Schlenther in his criticism of "Ghosts" (1887) notes[1] that the preliminary story is long and important, that the drama brings the gradual unfolding of completed character instead of progressive character development, that the struggle against social relations is similar to the struggle against fate in "Oedipus." Fontane's criticism of "Oedipus Rex" shows a quarter of a century before the Ibsen cult began the conviction that the inexplicable misery of human life is a basis for tragedy superior to any finely fabricated tragic problem evolved in large part from the brain of a dramatist.

It is further worthy of note that except in the case of "Iphigenie" Fontane pays to the greatest classicists of his own nation no higher praise than that called forth by parts of their Storm-and-Stress dramas in which realism is a prominent factor. He considers Wallenstein a sentimentalist and a phrase-maker in spite of the classic purity of form which he recognizes in "Die Piccolomini."[2] His severest thrusts are aimed at the false pathos of Marquis Posa,[3] whom he terms a

[1] Cf. above, p. 125, n. 1. The novelty of Ibsen's method was a subject of interest at this time. Dr. Schlenther expresses the wish to defend "Ghosts" against such a charge as Spielhagen had made against "A Doll's House," namely, that in essence it is epic, presenting simply the turning-point of a well-conceived novel.

[2] W, 2, VIII, 73 (1878); *V. Z.* Apr. 26, 1881, B 1.

[3] In a report on "Hamlet" (*V. Z.* June 14, 1877) Fontane remarks that the interpretation of Hamlet may easily become "Marquisposa-haft"; he calls Acosta a Jewish Posa (*V. Z.* Nov. 11, 1879, B 2); cf. also W, 2, VIII, 133 (1871), 217 (1871). — The diversity of dates shows here that Fontane's feeling in regard to the character of Posa was no mere temporary whim. There can be no doubt that it is due in part to his hatred of phrase (cf. above, p. 135); he has no praise for the majesty and the sonorous richness of the Schiller language and on occasions shows lack of sympathy with it (cf. above, p. 140); he mentions a thrill of joy in connection with "Die Jungfrau von Orleans" (cf. below, p. 148), but this is due to the romantic beauty he finds in it; his only extreme commendation of the language of a verse drama by Schiller is for "Die Piccolomini" (cf. above, p. 136), in which he notes also clearness and classic form. His objection to Wallenstein (cf. above,

mere abstraction, classing him on one occasion with Uriel Acosta. He writes on the other hand that "Kabale und Liebe" never loses its charm, that there is little in existence more effective on the stage than the last scene of Act II, that the justly celebrated scenes in later works by Schiller such as "Jungfrau" or "Tell" are artistically pale (kunstvoll angekränkelt) compared with this.[1] His extreme praise of "Götz von Berlichingen"[2] is called forth largely by the fact that it is a faithful reproduction of the period it presents.

In spite of the strong appeal that realism makes to Fontane, there is no tendency in his criticism to exalt the realistic except in so far as it serves the ends of art. And the quality of life-likeness is not in itself a guaranty of art. The marriage of Kuck and the Countess of Thern in Lindau's "Diana" is to Fontane artistically impossible (1873), although its counterpart may be found in life.[3] The introduction of the

p. 119) and Posa as conceptions are similar to the charge made against Ibsen of "phrases of feeling" (cf. above, p. 126). There is in each case the imputation of lack of truth, based upon false understanding of or overwrought use of instinctive feeling. Further evidence for this ultimate foundation for Fontane's rejection of Wallenstein and Posa lies in the fact that this imputation of lack of truth is never involved in that which Fontane accepts or commends in Schiller. He writes to Maximilian Ludwig of Karl Moor, a character that in his opinion cannot maintain itself without some empty pathos: "Das Wesen der Dinge bleibt dasselbe, aber die Form wechselt. Im letzten empfinde ich (gerade ich) genau so wie Karl Moor, aber alles, was er *sagt* und *tut*, erscheint mir unsinnig und lächerlich. Die Form von damals ist nicht mehr die Form von heut. . . . Alles geschwollen und aufgetrieben." (W, 2, X, 385 f. — May 3, 1878.) He writes on the other hand that "Tell" and "Kabale und Liebe" are both in spite of improbabilities true to the present day (cf. above, p. 134, n. 1 — 1882; W, 2, VIII, 67 — 1884).

[1] *V. Z.* Mar. 20, 1879, B 3. — The special scene referred to is that in which Ferdinand threatens his father with exposure unless he recalls the command for Luise's arrest. — It is interesting to note that here again Fontane's ranking of a drama has close connection apparently with his estimate of the language. He wrote years later: "Diese Millersprache, die ganz modern und wie Ibsen in der höheren Potenz wirkt" (*V. Z.* June 21, 1889, Abendausgabe).

[2] *V. Z.* Apr. 22, 1884, B 1.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 236.

love motive in "Bataille de dames," before Lucy has any indication that the valet is a mere masquerader, he regards (1876) as so inesthetic a means of involving the plot that the effect of the flaw is not removed when the central figure unmasks later as Captain Henry of Flavigneul.[1] In a letter to his wife (1883) he denounces on general principles the use of a narrow, empty, ridiculous conception of life for literary ends, accurately as it may mirror a certain stratum of society.[2] Another phase of this conviction that art requires more than the realistically commonplace occurs (1889) in his defense of Ellida in "The Lady from the Sea." He considers her adapted to artistic ends in drama not only on the ground that she represents a modern temperamental type, but because she is also a courageous, noble type.[3]

Fontane's basis for acceptance or rejection is, furthermore, always ultimately the same, whether it has to do with material or with method, with the fancied or the real. He terms it truth. It is on this basis that he accepts the problem as found in "Vor Sonnenaufgang" and rejects it in "Ghosts"; that he accepts the pathos of Melchthal and rejects that of Posa; that he accepts the conception of Ellida as a type but rejects the method by which Ibsen brings her to the realization of freedom. What he accepts is based upon spontaneous impulse. What he rejects is consciously worked out on the foundation of overwrought sentiment. The truth that Fontane demands in art seems, therefore, a golden mean between natural instinct and proportion, involving both.

This idea of truth gains distinctness if we consider his discussion of Björnson's "A Gauntlet" in relation to that of "Ghosts" and "The Lady from the Sea." Fontane prefers (Dec. 1889) that version[4] of "A Gauntlet" which eliminates

[1] W, 2, VIII, 111 f. — Fontane mentions this as one of the instances in which art shows sterner laws than life.

[2] Cf. W, 2, VII, 64 f.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 195, 205.

[4] Fontane's report on "A Gauntlet" appeared *V. Z.* Dec. 16, No. 588, Abendausgabe. A large part of this report is found W, 2, VIII, 213 ff. — There were two versions of this drama (cf. *Freie Bühne*, IV

the idea of a final union between the lovers, on the basis that a conciliatory conclusion would involve a sacrifice of human truth in order to preserve the traditional attitude of society. For Svava to have accepted the standard of society would have meant, in Fontane's opinion, for her to make a concession to her own integrity by relinquishing the integrity of her ideal. He even goes so far as to say that she wins our sympathy the more because her rejection of Alf is not in keeping with the usual course of events. It may be the first impulse of one who has read Fontane's criticism of Ibsen to charge him with whimsicality in regard to matters of social reform. There is in reality, however, no inconsistency here. Fontane's objection to both "Ghosts" and "The Lady from the Sea" is due not to lack of sympathy for Ibsen's suggested social ideal but to the multiplication of details or phases through which he so emphasizes his theme that in the end the whole of that segment of life that he has chosen to portray seems to revolve around it, with the resultant impression of fixed combinations and corresponding reactions. Fontane writes in his criticism of "The Wild Duck" that this drama and "Ghosts" preach the same doctrine:[1]

"Erst wieder reinen Tisch; das andere wird sich finden. Und wenn sich's nicht findet, lieber der Hässlichkeit ins Gesicht gestarrt als der Verzerrung, lieber der Sünde als der Gleisnerei."

He says of the former, however, that the power of the work lies "in its genuineness and truth," that "life as such cele-

Jahrgang, 276 ff.; or *Nation* 21. 12. 1889): in the first, Svava's glove-scene occurs at the end of Act II, and the play closes after a third act with suggested reconciliation to follow a time of probation; in the second, the glove-scene, with which Act III closes, makes clear an irremediable breach between the lovers. It is for the latter version that Fontane expresses preference in his criticism, stating also that this was not the version used by the Free Stage. — The report of the *Freie Bühne* shows that the two versions were both used in part for this performance, with the consent of the author; the character of Nordau as *raisonneur* was omitted, as in the second version, but the solution of version one was retained.

[1] W, 2, VIII, 189 f. (Oct. 21, 1888).

brates there its artistic triumph." In "Ghosts," on the contrary, he takes exception to the prominence which Ibsen gives to the direct visitation of the sins of the fathers upon their children, without regard to the Biblical reference to the fourth generation.[1] He writes that the best of us, judged according to merit, would come to the gallows, that as an epidemic loses its powers suddenly in the physical world, so in the moral world mercy stays destruction and wholesomeness blossoms forth where disease would be expected. His adverse criticism of Ibsen in "The Lady from the Sea" is, finally, one which expresses[2] at the same time all that Fontane objects to in "Ghosts":

"Könnte er sich entschliessen, es mit dem Einfachsten, Natürlichsten und Bewährtesten, statt mit etwas Herausgeklügeltem, schliesslich durchaus Unwahrem und gewiss auch immer unwahr Bleibendem, weil sich nichts im Leben auf solche fix und fertigen Sätze zurückführen lässt — zu versuchen, so hätten wir ein grandioses Stück gehabt."

"A Gauntlet" involves no such cleverly devised question, intended to work itself out as by set magic formula. There is here, furthermore, no operating with double motives, as in "The Lady from the Sea."[3] The problem which makes the vital substance of the play is simple and real. The drama it serves is enacted before a background faithful to daily life. Svava's inability to win through compromise the semblance of what she had but believed herself to have, makes even her not unreal, but unusual. When Fontane writes in regard to her that "any strong impulse of a true and noble heart is a truth the value of which is only increased by its deviation from commonplace reality," he pleads, therefore, only for that foundation for art for which the lifelike alone is on occasions inadequate.

Fontane had written as early as 1872 that art must be more than a mere copy, that it must add depth and beauty to

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] W, 2, VIII, 204 (Mar. 21, 1889).
[3] Cf. above, p. 112.

existence.[1] This point of view he preserves consistently throughout his course as critic. He sees in "Die Familie Selicke" (Apr. 1890) a phase of truth never attained so perfectly in the drama before. He writes of it [2] that it observes and reproduces Berlin life with such accuracy as to render insignificant all its predecessors in this line. He places here, accordingly, rather than in "Vor Sonnenaufgang" or Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness," the entrance, so to speak, upon "virgin soil," the parting of old and new in dramatic art. Yet he finds the succession of painful scenes a transgression of the law of proportion. He would not bar this new type from the stage, but makes its "right to naturalization" dependent upon the addition of more of the "mysterious molding-power of art."

And for this molding-power he points to a union of the realistic with the romantic. Romanticism [3] had waved its magic wand over Fontane in his youth and he never ceased to feel its spell. He says [4] of himself (1891):

"Ich bin mit Maria Stuart zu Bett gegangen und mit Archibald Douglas aufgestanden. Das romantisch Phantastische hat mich von Jugend auf entzückt und bildet meine eigenste südfranzösische Natur. . . ."

Although he recognizes Menzel and Turgenef as his models [5] (Dec. 1885), he writes [6] (August, 1885) of turning back at sixty-five to twenty-five and the making of songs and bal-

[1] W, 2, VIII, 210 f. — Fontane made the statement with reference to histrionic art in a report on Wichert's "Ein Schritt vom Wege."

[2] W, 2, VIII, 313 ff.

[3] The term Romanticism refers here not to the legacy of any particular group of men to literature, but is used in the broader sense of a literary tendency. Fontane seldom refers to the so-called Romantic School.

[4] W, 2, XI, 262 (letter of Apr. 15 to Hans Hertz). Fontane objects here to the fact that one of the Hart brothers has put him in a fixed category, apparently with no consideration of his poetic tastes and attainments.

[5] W, 2, XI, 104 f. (letter to Ludwig Pietsch). — He refers evidently to narrative work.

[6] W, 2, XI, 100 (letter to Emilie Zöllner).

lads. He writes[1] (1889) in the midst of his enthusiasm for what he calls the "new realism" that the romantic remains his favorite type, that the artistic pleasure which he owes to the realistic school, the admiration with which he reads Zola, Turgenef, Tolstoi, and Ibsen, vanish before the thrill (der erhabenen Freude) which such romantic works as "Chevy-Chase," Bürger's "Lenore," Goethe's "Erlkönig," Strachwitz's "Herz von Douglas," and Schiller's "Jungfrau von Orleans" afford him. Plans for a romantic novel based on East Frisian material from the Middle Ages engage him[2] (1895) just after the completion of works in which his power in realism is as evident as in "Effi Briest" and "Die Poggenpuhls."

But in addition to this evident fondness for the romantic, Fontane had the conviction that art cannot submit to the restrictions of the purely realistic. Only the semblance of reality can speak from the stage in any case.[3] The most perfect photographic accuracy cannot make this semblance real. Art must, therefore, resort to the ideal to give the impression of completeness; it demands also humor to offset sadness, light to contrast with shadow.[4] Realism, to come into its own,

[1] W, 2, VIII, 435 f. — This is from Fontane's second criticism (*V. Z.* Oct. 3, No. 461) of Voss's "Brigitta," which his first criticism (*V. Z.* Oct. 2, B 1; cf. W, 2, VIII, 298 f.) shows to be an example of what he terms the 'false romantic,' and which suffers by his comparison of it with "Ghosts."

[2] Various letters of March and July show him busy in gathering material for this work (W, 2, XI, 344 f., 349 f., 352). — According to Fontane's diary, "Effi Briest" was accepted by Rodenberg in May, 1894, for the *Deutsche Rundschau;* "Die Poggenpuhls" was sent to Pantenius in the summer of 1895.

[3] W, 2, VIII, 110. — Fontane writes in this connection in defense of "Der Traum ein Leben" (1884): "ob dieser Schein das Wiederbild von Leben oder Traum ist, ist ziemlich gleichgültig. Nicht die Genesis des 'schönen Scheins' ist das entscheidende, sondern sein Kolorit, seine Leuchtkraft."

[4] W, 2, VIII, 312. — Fontane made this suggestion in connection with "Das Friedensfest," June, 1890, and had expressed it previously in a letter (cf. p. 149, n. 1). When he commends Ernst v. Wolzogen (Jan. 1891) for this opinion expressed in "Humor und Naturalismus" (W, 2, XI, 256 f.) it is without mention of the fact that he has already offered the same solution.

must employ beauty as well as ugliness. This the romantic world affords, in Fontane's opinion, through its inherent connection with poetry. He wrote to Friedrich Stephany, October 10, 1889:[1]

"Der Realismus wird ganz falsch aufgefasst, wenn man von ihm annimmt, er sei mit der Hässlichkeit ein für allemal vermählt. Er wird erst ganz echt sein, wenn er sich umgekehrt mit der Schönheit vermählt und das nebenherlaufende Hässliche, das nun mal zum Leben gehört, verklärt hat. Wie und wodurch? Das ist seine Sache, zu finden. Der beste Weg ist der des Humors. Übrigens haben wir in Shakespeare längst die Vollendung des Realismus. Er wird nur in seiner Grösse nicht ausschliesslich daraufhin angesehn."

He had written in a criticism of October 1, 1889:[2]

"Der Realismus schafft nur die *falsche* Romantik aus der Welt, die Romantik, die keine ist. Mit den mittelalterlichen Stoffen, zumal mit dem Rittertümlichen kann die Poesie nie aufräumen; es ist eine Welt, der der Stempel des Poetischen von vornherein in einem besonders hohen Masse aufgedrückt ist. Aber dieser Stempel ist ihnen nicht so unvertilgbar tief aufgedrückt, dass er nicht unter prosaischen Händen verloren gehen könnte. . . . Die ledernsten Menschen machen sich an die romantischen Stoffe . . . die rechten gläubigen Dichter müssen erst wieder dafür erweckt werden. Dann werden sie auch das Publikum zu erwecken imstande sein. Solange die Romantik aber nur ein Geschäft ist, hat sie verspielt. Sie wird wieder siegen, wenn sie wieder ein lebendiges Gefühl geworden ist."

Fontane's plea is here, as elsewhere, for an ever-vigorous and comprehensive art that preserves the best in the old as it reaches forth to the new. It is a plea for the union of poetry with realism for the attainment in art of that phase of truth which cannot be grasped by sense alone. He can therefore consistently question (1875) the demand of August Wilhelm Schlegel that each new work of art draw the curtain from before a new world,[3] and yet (1889) defend the Free Stage in its choice of the new, with the assertions [4] that their failures may be in the end as valuable as successes, and that their motto should be "Dare to err."

[1] W, 2, XI, 219.
[2] Cf. above, p. 148, n. 1.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 238.
[4] W, 2, VIII, 438 f.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Final Estimate of Fontane as Critic

The failure to recognize Fontane among the constructive forces in German dramaturgy is due, no doubt, in part to the facts that he never allied himself with any movement; that his other literary activities made his criticism seem at best but a side issue, — especially since he was not officially connected with any theater; and that most of it came and went with the days of the calendar. But this failure is dependent in part also upon his method and style in criticism.

Both were necessarily varied on account of the variety of material on which, in the theater reports especially, the work was based; Fontane's belief that it was absurd to treat a play seriously, if it lacked both depth of insight and artistic form, barred a large number of the productions of the Royal Stage from becoming anything more to him as critic than another index — one of many — to the needs of German dramatic art. Furthermore, the inextricable element of personality must always impart a greater variety of hues — less brilliant though they be — to obligatory reports than to voluntary criticism, since routine assists interest in dictating such work and necessity rather than impulse prescribes the time for expression. The fact that Fontane's criticism rests on esthetic sense rather than dogma is also not without a contribution to variety in point of attack. As a result, when spontaneous feeling triumphs and no vital esthetic principle is in question, there is a reflection of that saving sense of humor or that delight in novelty that played a considerable part in relieving his career of routine; when his mood is

colorless and the play imparts no color to it, his message is neutral although a half-hearted approbation of specific details may be involved; on the other hand, when his esthetic sense is outraged, he may employ a degree of sarcasm quite proportionate to the violation of principle and good taste.

A conscious element works, too, in conjunction with personality, namely, the adaptation of style to the needs of the daily press and the interest of the reading public. There is no indication that Fontane ever renounced the journalistic principle revealed in his London letters, that a quiet, contemplative treatment of bald facts is not adapted to the public at large, that suggestion, originality, and cleverness are necessary. He wrote to his wife in 1857 concerning the shortcomings of *Die Zeit*:[1]

"Die Leute sind alle auf dem Holzweg, *prinzipiell* in dem sie meinen, eine Zeitung müsse durch ruhige, besonnene Darstellung wirken. Das ist lächerlich; so schreibt man für Staatsmänner aber nicht für's grosse Publikum resp. den Berliner Budiker. Ausserdem (ganz abgesehen von dem Prinzip, nach dem man redigirt) fehlt es überall an Geist, Witz, Gedanken, so dass es nicht viel besser werden würde, selbst wenn man von dem Prinzip 'einfacher Sachlichkeit' abgehen wollte."

A letter of 1852 shows the same journalistic aim; he wrote that he would be satisfied if anyone could praise his articles a little for esprit, clearness, and cleverness of style.

Especially in the reports on the Berlin stage, he meets this need by the employment of jest and analogy. Both, although in keeping with conviction, are doubtless in the main the natural expression of a rare conversationalist. He talks to his readers as he would talk to a circle of congenial friends. The impression that results is rarely, therefore, that of studied or forced cleverness, although Fontane fails to resort to the means noted only when his esthetic sense is in perfect accord with the drama in hand, and although they are only less prominent as weapons against vulnerable points

[1] *L* — London, d. 18. März, 57; for the reference to 1852 cf. W, 2, VI, 24.

even in his serious criticism. He writes, for example, of "Herodes und Mariamne" that one has at the end a sense of having passed five stations of martyrdom; of Dr. Wangel in "The Lady from the Sea" that he should be set in gold; of Ibsen's treatment of the motif of freedom in this drama, "Ich bin auch für Freiheit, und die Vossische Zeitung noch mehr; aber so viel werden wir beide von der Freiheit nicht erwarten. Auch die Freiheit, wie alles im Leben, kocht schliesslich nur mit Wasser"; of Ellida's impulse to follow the Northman when he reminds her of her oath, that any Berlin woman would in a like situation have bethought herself of the police.[1]

His use of analogy amounts frequently to little more than a figure of speech: he writes, for example, of Frl. Küssner's Luise that she wraps all her words in crape; of Beck's Karl Moor, that he handles his bandits like a debating-club; of Matkowsky's acting, that it suggests the thunderstorm and the song of the nightingale, Icelandic berserkers and jasmine-arbor sentimentality.[2] Frequently, too, he suggests the analysis of a character or the description of its interpretation by an actor through detailed reference to well-known localities or social types; the provincial and class eccentricities of North Germany were particularly familiar to him, and he makes the most of them in his criticism. Again, he employs anecdote to drive his point home.

Fontane himself admits the use of analogy to a degree that might lay him open to the charge of mannerism, but justifies it by the desire to say something different from the stereotyped criticism and at the same time give vividness to his work. He adds:[3]

"Nur so, behaupt' ich, vermag ich dem Leser ein leidlich anschauliches Bild davon zu geben, wie die gestrige Jungfrau von Orleans oder der gestrige Bolingbroke wirklich war. 'Der Bolingbroke des Herrn X. liess die hofmännische Haltung vermissen,' sagt gar nichts; wenn ich aber nach einem lebhaft und richtig empfangenen Eindruck

[1] Cf. for this paragraph W, 2, VIII, 151, 192 ff.
[2] Cf. for this paragraph W, 2, VIII, 65, 59, 63.
[3] W, 2, VIII, 386 f. (1881).

aus voller Überzeugung niederschreibe: 'Sein Bolingbroke hatte die Haltung eines Landrats aus dem Neu-Vorpommerschen' oder: 'eines Rittmeisters vom Kürassierregiment Kaiser Nikolaus von Russland,' so sag' ich damit etwas Anschauliches und setze den Leser auf einen Schlag in die Möglichkeit zu wissen, was der gestrige Gast vom Bolingbroke hatte und was nicht."

There is also a clear expression of conviction from him in regard to jest, the employment of which he considers advantageous to criticism, provided it is clear that an honest and honorable opinion underlies it.[1]

There can be no doubt that, as he himself evidently believed, this method and style give his work originality and piquancy and remove it from the pale of the dogmatic. They tend also, on the other hand, to a treatment that is at times unduly chatty and diffuse. For the casual, more or less disinterested daily reader, they probably often furnished amusement primarily, perhaps even at the expense of any serious thought as to the principle beneath analogy or anecdote. Consequently, like romantic irony in its tendency toward negation, this method introduces into Fontane's criticism at times an element of self-destruction that retards conviction.

But the theater reports are not without other weaknesses that must naturally have detracted from a general appreciation of their full value even by those who approached them with entire confidence in the critic's ability. There is occasionally a disturbing lack of definiteness or an apparent contradiction due either to an indistinct use of term or to a hasty generalization. A single instance will in each case suffice to illustrate the point in hand. In spite of the honest admission that Wilhelmine von Hillern's "Geierwally" as arranged for the stage approaches at times dangerously near the ludicrous, Fontane commends the sense of fitness shown in both character portrayal and situation, failing, however,

[1] W, 2, X, 335 (letter of Sept. 13, 1874, to Ludwig Pietsch; Fontane was justifying here a criticism of Alma Tadema which he had written for the press as substitute for Pietsch; cf. above, p. 17, n. 3, and p. 22.

to give a very illuminating definition of the exact saving grace of this play. He writes:[1]

"In diesem Schauspiele der Frau v. Hillern haben wir richtige Menschen, die das Richtige sagen und das Richtige tun und dies Richtige tun zu richtiger Zeit und am richtigen Ort. Und so kommt es denn, dass wir alles mit zu durchleben glauben und in jene Mitleidenschaft gezogen werden, die sich nur da einstellt, wo statt der Engebildetheiten von Leid und Lust ihre Wirklichkeiten an uns herantreten. Diese Richtigkeit (Korrektheit ist etwas anderes und Echtheit auch und Wahrheit auch) ist der gute Engel, der neben dem beständig am Abgrunde hinschreitenden Stück einhergeht."

"The critic doth protest too much, methinks," — an unfortunate impression in consideration of the fact that Fontane evidently admired the play.[2] Later, comparing it with Wildenbruch's "Harold" to the detriment of the latter, he writes that it will disappear not on account of its mistakes, but because it belongs by virtue of its material to a lower art-realm, because only kings and great destinies have the right to engage our interest permanently.[3] Extreme illustrations of the weakness in question have been chosen with purpose; the first has to do with no less important a word in Fontane's criticism than truth; the second seems to involve the statement of an absolute tenet opposed to the whole spirit of his work, to his interest in the human being *per se* without respect to station. Considered in the light of his general criticism, what is apparently a statement of principle can mean only this, that public taste prefers characters of high rank, such as are found in "Harold."

There are also rare instances in Fontane's criticism of something suggesting personal bias. The most marked of these are his dislike of the pathetic hero, which appears in

[1] W, 2, VIII, 227 f. (Oct. 1881).

[2] This is one of the very rare instances in which his diary entry, if it involved more than mere mention, does not suggest the point of departure for the published criticism. He writes: "trotz manchem, was sich dagegen sagen lassen mag, ein brillantes Stück Arbeit, voll dramatischem Leben" (*D* — under the heading: "Sommer und Herbst, 1881").

[3] *V. Z.* Apr. 23, 1882, B 1 (additional to W, 2, VIII, 254 ff.).

his treatment of Marquis Posa, Uriel Acosta, and Wallenstein; his sensitiveness to a disregard in art for the dignity of European class distinction, illustrated best by his adverse criticism of Scribe's methods in "Bataille de dames" and "Les doigts de fée"; his objection to Ibsen's treatment of the ideal marriage, which may account for the term "Quatschlise" with which he honors Nora. It must be granted, however, that Fontane is not without estimable company in any of these positions and that, in his case, the objection to type or motif always occurs in defense of one or more stable art principles, prominent in his critical work.[1]

Although the last two instances argue a kind of conservatism in matters of established institutions often shown by Fontane and a point of view in itself at variance with his enthusiasm for novelty, his position amounts in the end to nothing more unreasonable than a preference of evolution to revolution; in his criticism of Scribe[2] he defends himself against the possible charge of letting class prejudice influence his opinion as follows:

"Ich gehöre nicht zu denen, die die Menschheit erst vom Baron an aufwärts zu rechnen beginnen; ich habe mitunter ein leises Vorgefühl davon, als würde ich meine Tage nicht hier, sondern in Gegenden beschliessen, wo es keine Herzöge und keine Grafen gibt, und ich glaube dabei des einen sicher zu sein, dass die Feudalpyramide mit zu dem Letzten gehören würde, was ich da drüben wirklich entbehren würde. . . . es kommt nur darauf an, ob diese Dinge in einem Einzelfall als einfache, nichts bedeuten wollende Tatsache an uns herantreten, oder ob sie mit einem 'Geht hin und tut desgleichen,' will also sagen: als ein neues Zeitevangelium prinzipiell und gesinnungstüchtig von der Bühne her zu uns sprechen. Hier in der alten Welt, wie die Dinge nun mal liegen, ist dies alles einfach Umsturz. . . . Die Torheit, die Inkonsequenz, vor allem die Kurzsichtigkeit, die sind es, die mich verdriessen. . . ."

[1] This reference to Nora occurs in the letter to Stephany, in which Fontane pronounced Hauptmann a greater poet than Ibsen because more true (Mar. 1898); cf. above, p. 127, n. 1.

[2] Fontane charges Scribe (W, 2, VIII, 112 ff.) with preaching in "Les doigts de fée" a new popular gospel, with courting public favor by making a disinherited countess play the role of modiste so successfully that her needle delivers her enemies into her hands.

He does not enlarge upon his dislike for Nora beyond the single word "untrue," but he had written to Guido Weiss almost a decade before concerning lack of maturity in the Ibsen criticism of Schlenther and Brahm:

"Ich bin auch scharf Ibsenianer, aber Ibsenianer mit siebzig, die andern mit fünfunddreissig und — unverheiratet. Daher das Eingehen auf den Ibsenschen Eheblödsinn."

The severe though brief denunciation of Nora naturally suggests also this basis for objection, especially since his last published reference to Ibsen suggests unreality, improbability:[1]

"Gegen Nora bin ich sehr, auch gegen andere Ibsengestalten, aber für einen Bekehrten dürfen sie mich doch nicht halten. Ich bin Ibsen gegenüber fast ganz unverändert geblieben. In vorderster Reihe stehen doch Bewunderung und Dank, denn er ist ein grosser Reformator unseres Bühnenwesens gewesen. Er hat neue Gestalten und vor allem eine neue Sprache geschaffen. Dass unter den Gestalten viele aus der Retorte sind, darf man ihm nicht so übelnehmen. Dafür war er — Apotheker."

It would be in keeping with the general spirit of Fontane's criticism of Ibsen for him to reject as "doctrinaire" the possibility that a Nora, newly awakened to her dignity as a human entity, could even consider in a moment of sanity a permanent separation from her children; action on the basis of mere sentimental devotion to principle was to Fontane the essence of human untruth, therefore of unreality. His conservatism cannot be separated here then — nor can it ever be separated entirely — from that pivotal regard for proportion that regulated all his tenets, that served to secure a balance for him between antagonistic forces in criticism and in life.

There is, furthermore, in the theater reports a tendency to extreme statement which, though attributable clearly to the spell of momentary enthusiasm that affects to a certain degree all occasional criticism, makes it necessary to consider

[1] W, 2, XI, 207 (1889, to Guido Weiss); 465 (May 17, 1898, to F. Stephany).

single reports in relation to the whole in order to reach a complete understanding of the critic's point of view. The published criticisms of Ibsen and Hauptmann, which furnish the most important example here, are somewhat confusing at the first consecutive reading by virtue of the superlatives doled out to both dramatists. Criticisms that are unquestionably unusual in point of departure and in the weighing of subtle esthetic values are thus weakened by the necessity for making additions and subtractions, slight though they be, in order to render the series entirely consistent. That Fontane was himself aware of this quality in his work is evident from the fact that he wrote to Stephany with reference to a proposed criticism of "Vor Sonnenaufgang":[1]

"Ja, ich bin auch sehr von ihm (Hauptmann) eingenommen, werde mich aber sehr manierlich ausdrücken und allen Radau vermeiden, was ich auch kann, ja muss, weil ich durchaus nicht so stehe, dass ich wünschen könnte, die nächste Generation mit lauter Gerhart Hauptmannschen Schnapstragödien oder dem Ahnlichen beglückt zu sehen."

There is a certain naïveté in this expression of intention, a quality which makes in all of Fontane's work one of a number of elements that are paradoxical[2] without being incomprehensible; it is less prominent here than in the not infrequent attempts, requiring a stretching of the point in question, to make courteous amends within the bounds of honesty for previous impatient or extreme adverse criticism of mediocre art.

But neither the possible rare indications of bias on the one hand nor the inconsistent expressions of enthusiasm on the other partake of the nature of personal prejudice. From

[1] W, 2, XI, 219 (1889).

[2] Fontane's personality is strikingly one of reconciled opposites: enthusiasm for democratic ideals is offset by a distinct romantic, almost childlike interest in types representative of the Prussian landed gentry and the nobility; the firm belief in the right of the individual to self-expression is offset by deep reverence for inviolable universal law; what amounts here as elsewhere to an admission of shortcoming is counterbalanced by repeated expressions of self-confidence, the latter indeed so naïve or so softened by a lovable personality as to be entirely inoffensive.

this Fontane is, true to his theory, extraordinarily free. Had he been inclined to such expressions of personal feeling as are the pitfall of many critics, both his well-defined habit of keeping an objective point of view and his high regard for the critic's function would have militated against them. But he was not given to consuming dislikes and he never attempts, therefore, to use criticism as a means of making propaganda for anything except a truer, more stable art. The most interesting indication in all his work of an attempt at retaliation is but a harmless parry, likely to do more injury on the rebound to Fontane's judgment than in the first instance to the object of the aim, and so far separated in time from the cause of irritation that it can be regarded at most only as a naive thrust for personal satisfaction with no thought of enduring harm. After surpassing all his colleagues in commendation of Paul Heyse's "Die Weisheit Salomos" he weakens his whole argument for the drama by adding that among modern productions Richard Voss's "Der Mohr des Zaren" is most similar to it. His subsequent admission in the same report that Voss's play is impossible as a play, that the two works are related only in treatment of historical background, is evidence that Voss's free use of fact could in Fontane's own opinion have no real weight here in support of the principle in question — the vindication of such license for the sake of distinct gain in poetic truth. Fontane was not averse to padding to some extent reports in which he had nothing really vital to say. Here, however, the tone and argument show both interest and sincere admiration. It seems probable that, enticed by the actual similarity of purpose evident in the two works mentioned, Fontane introduced the second in secret enjoyment of the thought of Heyse's discomfiture at sight of the name of Voss in print in juxtaposition with his own. Fontane knew that, low as he himself rated Voss as a dramatist, Heyse rated him still lower,[1] and he knew also only too well Heyse's self-satisfaction.

[1] In justice to Fontane it must be said that he criticized "Der Mohr des Zaren" more favorably than any of Voss's other plays. He wrote of

On the whole, indeed, whatever weaknesses Fontane's criticism shows are more than counterbalanced by frankness, breadth of view, objectivity of verdict, humor, and the charm of personality. In the strong points of his work he was invulnerable to the adverse conditions that confronted him as critic. The weaknesses in his critical style he fell into through the fact that the stage failed on many occasions to inspire the *causeur* to genuine criticism. He once wrote to his wife, evidently in reply to the charge of diffuseness, that this was connected with his literary virtues, that he treated the small with the same fondness as the great because he did not draw the customary lines of difference between small and great, that he was brief, however, when the great was in question since the great needed no artistic treatment in order to be effective.[1] Especially the last part of this statement, made with reference to narrative work, could not be applied generally to Fontane's theater reports; Schiller and Goethe are, to be sure, both passed over with

it after the première that it fulfils technically various requirements of a good play in that its purpose is sympathetic, its characters keep within the bounds of probability, it avoids absurdity and caprice, and is entertaining. In regard to the fact that the historic setting, deftly chosen, is incorrectly treated, he writes consistently with his position toward Heyse later: "Aus dieser historischen Uncorrektheit aber dem Stück einen Vorwurf machen zu wollen, scheint mir nicht statthaft. Das Colorit ist richtig, und Ort und Zeit dienen durchaus der Aufgabe, die der Dichter sich stellte" (*V. Z.* Apr. 5, 1884). For other criticisms of Voss, cf. W, 2, VIII, 294 ff. — Fontane's criticism of "Die Weisheit Salomos" was written after the first performance of this play (1888; cf. above, pp. 129). There is among Fontane's posthumous papers an account of a call from Heyse ("Paul Heyse — Besuch bei mir. 2. März. 1883") soon after Fontane's enthusiastic report on "Die Rantzau" (Feb 1883; cf. above, pp. 114), in the course of which Heyse berated this play and Voss (an acquaintance of both and a member of Rütli at this time), and gave various additional evidences of a sense of the superiority of himself and Munich to the rest of the German art-world. The visit seemed to leave a bad taste, so to speak, and Fontane evidently dashed off the report of it in a spirit of irritation. He did not have the squib printed, however, and it was withheld from the public by his heirs until after Heyse's death (1914).

[1] W, 2, VII, 71 f. (Aug. 1883).

comparatively slight analysis of either literary or dramatic art, partly on this account perhaps, largely because their dramas were widely known and often poorly given; yet Fontane's best style is found, naturally, as are his most valuable opinions, in his treatment of real masterpieces. The statement is, nevertheless, not without probable bearing upon his criticism. At any rate, much that is dramatically of comparatively little import is treated with a fondness not common among critics of insight, a fact due not to failure to draw an artistic distinction between small and great, but to the ability to find seeds of promise in the small in the absence of the great. The seriousness, depth, and esthetic value of Fontane's criticism of real art have been amply treated. It remains to say what is practically self-evident from various excerpts, that his best work shows also a stylistic individuality and power unusual in obligatory occasional criticism, — clearness, directness, striking comparisons or contrasts, onomatopoetic word-groups — often groups of three — not infrequent effective brevity, above all that union of vividness and suggestion in poetic description or analysis that imparts to the reader something of the critic's own esthetic insight and a new or keener appreciation of whatever beauty was felt before.

Detailed comparison of Fontane with any other critic is not the function of this study. Even for the sake of tentative ranking it has little purpose, since the peculiar character of his work and the fact that he was neither professional critic nor officially connected with any stage makes it impossible to put him in any ready-made category. It is noteworthy, however, that he has some points in common with several of Germany's most celebrated critics and that he is, in certain respects, even superior to these well-known contributors to universal criticism of the drama and the stage.

His criticism shows in common with that of Lessing the attempt to bring about unity between principle and stage conditions with progress toward the illusion of realism, and a strong underlying desire for the general elevation of Ger-

man dramatic art. There is in the work of both the conviction of the innate independence of art, its privilege to use purpose, historical fact, and even daily life in its own way. Fontane is inspired, like Lessing, by the desire for truth; but Lessing's enthusiasm for truth is that of the restless searcher to whom the search itself is exhilarating. Fontane, equally ardent in steadfastness to an ideal, equally tireless but less intense, finds kernels of truth along the way; his use of those norms of naturalness and reality, related to truth, approaches everywhere closer by far to the nerve of actual life. Fontane has, like Lessing, the conviction that art must be national; but Lessing's patriotic message is that of the pathfinder and conscious reformer, Fontane's that of the beautifier whose strong desire for the unattained in art makes him so insistent that he is half unconsciously a reformer. Lessing does not disregard detail, but his work is in the main that of bold, telling strokes, whether for destruction or construction; Fontane is less a creator than an adapter; he has less to do with scaffolding; his work deals necessarily in large measure with details of artistic completeness. Lessing's message, although humorous in flashes, is polemical, and not wholly free from withering taunts and personal animosity; Fontane's, although touched at all points by the playing flame of personality, is mellow with a harmonious philosophy of life that removes the sting from his humor.

August Wilhelm Schlegel's criticism of drama is naturally far removed from Fontane's in general character by the radical difference in conditions attending it. Schlegel's purpose was scholarly literary criticism and his work was without immediate practical connection with the stage. He approaches his subject, therefore, frequently — as does Lessing — through definition of term or function, through comparison with an earlier critical theory or an earlier literary phenomenon, — methods rare in Fontane's work and never pursued in detail. In certain points, however, his statement of principle approaches more closely the spirit of Fontane's work than the spirit of Lessing's; he opposes Aristotle's dissection of beauty, advocating the Platonic method of

acquiring a conception of the beautiful by intuitive inspiration; he objects to the French conception of unity as based upon understanding rather than feeling; he is of the opinion that Molière exceeds the bounds of propriety in his treatment of morality, that comedy should instruct incidentally, that tragedy should at least indicate clearly an ultimate balance between great universal conflicting forces. There is in these expressions of conviction a distinct foreshadowing of Fontane's point of departure in criticism. The heritage is unconscious, for no question of borrowing arises in connection with Fontane's work; as if by virtue of his innate sympathy with the romantic reverence for beauty, he becomes the clearer mouthpiece for the earlier suggested treatment of the intuitive expression of beauty; Schlegel's principles, couched in elevated language, are the scholarly conclusions based on research and reflection; Fontane's varied reports, often far less elegant, have the irresistible animus that comes from a live esthetic sense busy with practical art problems.

In many respects Fontane's criticism bears even closer relation to that of Tieck. Fontane is, like Tieck, an observer of art rather than a philosopher. Both attempt to grasp art laws by feeling and enthusiasm rather than by theory. The highest test of dramatic values for both is artistic illusion in which reason and fancy are perfectly balanced because both are satisfied. Although Tieck was not, like Fontane, consistently independent throughout his career of tendency or school, both were alike in enthusiasm for the realistic as well as the romantic; alike, therefore, ultimately in the tenacity with which they clung to artistic freedom. Finally Tieck, as critical manager, showed a sympathy for the ephemeral and for the moderately successful play, especially if it caught anything of the genuine spirit of the people, similar to the tolerance that Fontane showed as critic.

Fontane had in common with all three an extreme admiration for Shakspere as the master who united most elements to be desired for German dramatic art. He was superior to all three in that understanding of life that comes through insight, practical contact, and sympathy. As a result of the

union of extreme sensitiveness to beauty and the recognition of a transitory element in all conceivable limitations, whether of time or of law, to the artistic impulse he had also a clearer conception than any of them of the absolute in art; paradoxical as the statement may seem, he revered, too, for this reason more than any of them the law of change, which he regarded as the only means of approach toward the absolute. Infinitely less a scholar than any of them, he was proportionately greater as an esthete in that he regarded even details of concrete form and their relation to spirit as well as abstract beauty. Less a theorist, he was nevertheless more fruitful in vital practical suggestions for artistic completeness. With less regard for definite fixed law, he directed his efforts toward clearer comprehension of that unwritten law of the poet's sense for beauty and proportion and the seer's comprehension of truth.

APPENDIX

Chronological Outline of Fontane's work and Literary Interests Exclusive, except in Section Three, of Criticism of Drama.

This outline is arranged to show how relatively small a part criticism of the drama occupies in Fontane's literary activity. It includes detailed reference to none of the miscellaneous book reviews and occasional criticisms of poetry and the narrative, which appeared often weekly for a time (as in 1875) or every two or three days (as in Dec. 1880). Mention of individual poems is rare, since it would have rendered the outline unnecessarily bulky. When no reference is given in regard to editions, the statement follows that found at the beginning of the various volumes of "Gesammelte Werke" or the card-catalog of Fontane publications, Royal Library, Berlin. — Except in case of editions, when no other reference is noted, the point in question is based on the diary; this occurs most frequently in sections 4, 5, 6. — Roman numerals refer to corresponding volumes in "Gesammelte Werke," Series 2. — It should be noted that Fontane's letters frequently show that a book was on the Christmas market in the year previous to that announced by the publisher (cf. X, 210, note).

1. *Previous to the career of letters.*

1834–36

A few poems, unimportant except as beginnings (X, 106 f.; XI, 499).

1837 (probably)

An epic begun (X, 106).

1841

"Shakespeares Strumpf" (II, 321).

1844 (probably)

Poem, "Der Towerbrand," soon after return from England (X, 107).

1846

"Der alte Derfflinger" and probably other Prussian ballads (III, 21).

1847

"Von der schönen Rosamunde" (cf. "Theodor Fontanes Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm Wolfsohn," 30).

1848–49

Poems (III, 286; X, 198).

2. *Beginning of a career; period previous to first criticism of drama.*

1850

"Männer und Helden" (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Von der schönen Rosamunde" (Dessau, *first edition*).

Poems (X, 15 ff., 25 and note, 38 and note).

1851

Poems (X, 34 f.).

"Gedichte" (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Deutsches Dichter-Album," an anthology edited by Fontane (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Von der schönen Rosamunde," 2. Aufl.

1852

Letters from England to various papers, especially to *Preussische Zeitung* and *Die Zeit* (VI, 1, 18).

Poems and ballads, some of which he calls translations from Percy and Scott (X, 49 and note, 55, 57).

"Deutsches Dichter-Album," 2.–3. Aufl.

1853

Critical essays and reviews (X, 73, 96 f. and note).

Poem (X, 59).

3. *Period of the letters on the London stage.*

1854

Poems and ballads (X, 126 ff., 148 and note; XI, 403 and note).

Critical review (X, 116, note).

Argo. Belletristisches Jahrbuch, edited by Fontane and Franz Kugler (Dessau, *first edition*).

"Ein Sommer in London" (Dessau, *first edition*).

1855

Poems (X, 126 and note, 184 and note).

Articles in various German publications, some of which were on the drama (X, 131; cf. above, p. 8).

1856

Poem (X, 157).

Articles (X, 147, 151 and note).

"Männer und Helden," 2. Aufl.

1857

Poems (X, 184).

Articles, some of which were on the drama (X, 177 and note, 183 f.; cf. above, p. 8).

1858

"Deutsches Dichter-Album," 4. Aufl. (X, 170, note).

1859

Miscellaneous articles, some on English subjects

"Jenseit des Tweed" finished (VI, 98).

"Aus England" finished (VI, 100).

Studies of the Mark Brandenburg begun (VI, 100).

4. *Intermediate period between the two devoted in part to criticism of drama.*

1860

Lectures on England and Scotland, also on English, Scotch, and American literature (Jan.–Mar.).

Work on "Wanderungen" at intervals throughout the year.

Work on other miscellaneous articles (Mar.–Oct.).

Ballads on generals of the Great Elector (July).

"Balladen" (Berlin, *first edition*) appeared in Dec. (X, 210; cf. XI, 403, note).

"Jenseit des Tweed" (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Aus England" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1861

Lectures and articles on English subjects occasional throughout the year.

Work on "Wanderungen" throughout the year; also on miscellaneous articles.

Poems.

Prolog for the Royal Theater on the Emperor's birthday (Mar. 22).

Memorial poem for the thirtieth of September.

Tenzonen to von Lepel (Nov.).

1862

(First two items as in 1861.)

Preliminary work for a novel (Jan. — cf. 1863).

"Grafschaft Ruppin," vol. 1 of "Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1863

Articles on English subjects, also miscellaneous articles; both are infrequent.

Work on "Wanderungen" throughout the year.

Prolog for *Festoper* (Mar.).

Probably work on "Vor dem Sturm" (cf. XI, 371; also: reference to novel, 1862; above, p. 3, n).

"Von der schönen Rosamunde," 3. Aufl. (Dresden).

"Oderland," vol. 2 of "Wanderungen" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1864

Essay on Shakspere.

Occasional miscellaneous articles.

Work on "Wanderungen" throughout the year.

Prolog for celebration in Royal Theater of 300th anniversary of Shakespere's birth (X, 240, note).

Ballad, "Gorm Grymme" (cf. above, p. 24, n. 1).

"Grafschaft Ruppin" (increased), 2. Aufl.

1865

Occasional reviews.

Work on Danish letters, history, and ballads (Jan.).

Spring and summer spent on "Der Schleswig-Holsteinische Krieg im Jahre 1864."

1866

Occasional reviews (Jan.); also, work on "Wanderungen."

Work on "Vor dem Sturm" (Apr.–June; cf. outline for 1863); he writes: "Mein Roman beschäftigt mich ausschliesslich."

"Böhmische Reisebriefe" (Sept.; Fontane had gone to Bohemia in August to collect material for the book on the war of 1866).

"Der Schleswig-Holsteinische Krieg im Jahre 1864" (Berlin, *first edition*).

Preparations for new war-book (Nov.).

Poem (X, 248).

1867

Occasional reviews.

War-book advances.

"Oderland" (revised), 2. Aufl.

1868

Finishes war-book and begins corrections which "last until June, 1869."

1869

Work on "Wanderungen" (June–Aug., Nov., Dec.).

"Der Feldzug in Böhmen und Mähren," vol. 1 of "Der deutsche Krieg von 1866" (Berlin, *first edition*).

5. *Period of reports on the Royal Stage of Berlin.*

1870

Arranges for a third war-book (Aug. — X, 270); for trip to scene of war (Sept. — X, 273).

"Der Feldzug in West- und Mitteldeutschland," vol. 2 of "Der deutsche Krieg von 1866" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1871

Work on "Kriegsgefangen," Erlebtes (Jan. — X, 281 ff.).

Occasional poems (June — X, 286).

Work on "Aus den Tagen der Occupation" (Oct. — X, 291).

"Der deutsche Krieg von 1866," 2. Aufl.

"Kriegsgefangen" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1872

Work on "Havelland," vol. 3 of "Wanderungen" (May, Sept. — X, 295, 304).

Work on "Der Krieg gegen Frankreich" (Sept. — X, 304).

"Aus den Tagen der Occupation" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1873

Work on "Grafschaft Ruppin" (cf. above, p. 26, n. 1).

Considers possibility of the translation into English of "Der Krieg gegen Frankreich" (Sept. — X, 314 ff.).

Reviews (Feb., Mar.; in Fontane's collected reports).

"Der Krieg gegen das Kaiserreich," vol. 1 of "Der Krieg gegen Frankreich" (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Havelland" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1874

Work on 3d edition of "Grafschaft Ruppin," greatly increased (Jan. — X, 320).

Is arranging 2d edition of "Gedichte" (Mar. — X, 323).

Collects material for "Spreeland," vol. 4 of "Wanderungen" (July — X, 328).

Work on 3d half-volume of "Der Krieg gegen Frankreich" (undated).

Reviews (Feb., July — in Fontane's collected reports).

1875

Work on last half-volume of war-book (Apr., July — X, 353 ff., 359).

Plans work on "Vor dem Sturm" for winter and attempts to arrange for the printing of it (Apr., July — X, 354, 357).

Plans work on "Fünf Schlösser," a supplementary volume of "Wanderungen" (Apr. — X, 354).

Reviews (Jan. – Aug. — in coll. reports).

"Grafschaft Ruppin," 3. Aufl.

"Gedichte," 2. Aufl.

1876

Arranges for publication of "Vor dem Sturm" (Aug. — X, 370); work on it (Nov. — X, 375).

Indications of work on "Havelland" (X, 372).

Article on "Akademie der Künste" (Aug. — in coll. reports).

"Der Krieg gegen die Republik," vol. 2 of "Der Krieg gegen Frankreich" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1877

Work on "Vor dem Sturm" (Mar. Dec.), finished in Dec. (X, 383 f.); this appeared in *Daheim*.

Reviews (Jan., July, Aug. — in coll. reports).

1878

Plans "Grete Minde" (May); work on it (Aug. —; VI, 267; X, 387, note); this appeared in *Nord und Süd*.

Wishes to try humorous representation of Berlin social life (May — X, 386).

Has material for a dozen stories (May — X, 388).

Plans work on "Schach von Wuthenow" (Aug., Sept. — VI, 268; X, 390).

1878

Work on "Wanderungen" (Nov., Dec. — X, 391 ff.).

Reviews (Mar., Nov. — in coll. reports).

"Vor dem Sturm" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1879

Work on "Grete Minde" (Jan., Feb. — X, 405, 410 f.); plans to finish it in the Harz (Apr. — X, 415 ff.).

Considers revision of "Oderland" for 3d edition (Jan. — X, 404 f.); plans work on Kustrin and Katte chapters (Feb. — X, 410 f.).

Plans work on "Ellernklipp" (Feb. — X, 410 f.); work on it (June, Dec. — XI, 3).

Plans work on "Schach von Wuthenow" (Apr.–June—X, 414).

Plans to finish in the rough in the Harz "Sidonie von Borcke" (sic.); this was never written (X, 415 ff.).

"L'Adultera" finished in the rough and refused by Hertz (Dec. — XI, 1 f.).

Reviews (Dec. — in coll. reports).

"Grete Minde" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1880

Has written "Die Brücke von Tay" (Jan. — XI, 2).

Corrects "L'Adultera" which appeared, June–July, in *Nord und Süd* (Mar. — XI, 1 f.).

Corrects chapter, Oranienburg, for revised edition of "Havelland" (Mar. — VI, 284).

Work on" Fünf Schlösser" (May, July, Nov. — VI, 300; XI, 8, 10, 25).

Corrects and revises "Ellernklipp" (June, Aug. — VI, 308; XI, 9).

Work on "Graf Petöfy" (Aug. — VI, 307 f.).

Reviews (Dec. — in coll. reports).

"Havelland," 2. Aufl.

1881

Work on "Fünf Schlösser" (Feb. — XI, 31 f., 40).

Corrects proof of "Ellernklipp" (Mar. — XI, 31 f.).

Collects material for "Spreeland" (Apr. — XI, 40 ff.).

Plans new book, "Storch von Adebar," never finished (June — XI, 45 f.).

1881

Works on "Graf Petöfy" and "Schach von Wuthenow" (June — XI, 45 f.).

Arranges for "L'Adultera" in book form (Sept. — XI, 56).

Plans to write the Scherenberg essay (Nov. — XI, 59 f.).

"L'Adultera" (Breslau, *first edition*).

"Spreeland" (Berlin, *first edition*).

"Ellernklipp" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1882

Work on "Schach von Wuthenow" (May, June); appeared in *V. Z.*, July–Aug.

Plans to spend October and subsequent months on "Graf Petöfy" and the Scherenberg essay (Aug. — VII, 19; cf. also XI, 83).

"Grafschaft Ruppin," 4. Aufl.; this was prepared in Sept. (XI, 71).

"Schach von Wuthenow" (Leipzig, *first* two *editions*).

1883

Work on a new novel, "Irrungen, Wirrungen" (Feb.).

Reviews (Feb.–May).

Needs material for "Graf Petöfy" (July — VII, 50).

Work on Scherenberg essay (Nov., Dec.).

"Graf Petöfy" (Dresden, *first edition*).

1884

Scherenberg essay is finished and corrected (Mar.–June — VII, 83, 88; XI, 60); appeared in *V. Z.*, June and July.

Eight chapters of "Irrungen, Wirrungen" written in *Hankels Ablage*, the scene of a part of the story; thus the entire plan is completed (12th–26th of May).

"Cecile" planned in Harz, at Hotel Zehnpfund, the scene of a part of the story (last part of June — VII, 98 ff.).

"Christian Friedrich Scherenberg" (Berlin, *first edition*).

Poem, "Jung Bismarck" for *Nord und Süd* (between Feb. and Apr.).

Correction of "Cecile" (June).

New ballads written (June, Aug.— VII, 116 f.; XI, 100).

Prolog to celebrate anniversary festival of French Colony (Oct. — XI, 101).

1884

Second edition of "Spreeland" is in preparation (Dec. — XI, 103 f.).

Part of "Stine" written (cf. letter of Apr. 1890, XI, 249).

"Unterm Birnbaum" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1886

Correction of "Spreeland" (Jan. — XI, 107).

Work on "Quitt" (May, June); can complete only one such story this year in addition to work for *V. Z.* (XI, 112, 115).

Completion of "Irrungen, Wirrungen" (cf. letter of Apr. 1890, XI, 249).

"Spreeland," 2. Aufl.

1887

Considers 5th edition of "Grafschaft Ruppin" with additions (Mar. — XI, 124 ff.).

Plans 3d edition of "Gedichte" with additions (Apr. — XI, 127).

Work on "Irrungen, Wirrungen" (probably correction, cf. outline for 1886); appeared in *V. Z.*, July–Aug. (July — XI, 131).

Wishes to write on the Quitzows (July — XI, 129 f.); a section of "Fünf Schlösser" bears this title.

Story, "Eine Frau in meinen Jahren" finished (July — XI, 130).

Prepares 2d edition of "Grete Minde" (Aug. — XI, 136.)

Contemplates writing "Die Likedeeler" (Aug. — XI, 135 f.).

Work on "Unwiederbringlich" (Oct.–Dec.).

"Cecile" (Berlin, *first two editions*).

"Irrungen, Wirrungen" (Leipzig, *first edition*).

1888

Writes for information for a ballad, "Brüderchen und Schwesterchen," never written (Feb. — XI, 145 f.).

Correction of "Fünf Schlösser" (Feb.).

Finishes" Frau Jenny Treibel" in the rough (May — VII 173 ff.).

"Stine" refused by *V. Z.* (June — XI, 155).

Plans ballad, "Die Todten von Hemmingstedt," not completed (Sept. — XI, 162 f.; cf. outline, 1889).

1888

Correction of "Unwiederbringlich" (Nov. — XI, 163 f.).

Article, "Die Märker und das Berlinertum" appeared (XI, 167, note).

"Fünf Schlösser" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1889

Correction of "Quitt."

Seeks information for "Die Todten von Hemmingstedt" (Jan. — XI, 174 f.).

Asks to send new ballads to Rodenberg for publication (June — VII, 216; XI, 195 f.).

Work on Bredow chapters for a new book (June — XI, 194 ff., 202); asks Dr. Schlenther to substitute for him as critic for the theater, since he is engaged in getting material for his Bredow book, upon which the little future he has left depends (Sept. — XI, 214 f.).

Correction of "Unwiederbringlich" (Oct.).

"Gedichte," 3. Aufl. (about one-third are new; cf. XI, 232 f.).

6. *Subsequent to the cessation of regular dramatic criticism* (cf. above, p. 34).

1890

Plans to write autobiography (XI, 242).

Correction of "Unwiederbringlich."

"Graf Petöfy," Neue Ausgabe (F. Fontane & Co., Berlin).

"Stine" (Berlin, *first edition*); this had appeared before in F. Mauthner's *Deutschland*, Bd. 1.

"Quitt" (Berlin, *first edition*); appeared before in *Gartenlaube*.

"Irrungen, Wirrungen" (Berlin, *first edition*).

All of the narratives which had appeared to this time are collected in "Gesammelte Romane und Erzählungen" (Berlin, 1890–92).

1891

Correction of "Frau Jenny Treibel."

Work on "Mathilde Möhring;" this appeared first in "Aus dem Nachlass" (Berlin, 1908), complete in plan but probably without final revision.

Work on "Die Poggenpuhls."

1891

"Gedichte," 4. Aufl. (XI, 260, 265 and note).

"Stine," 2.–3. Aufl.

"Irrungen, Wirrungen," 2. Aufl.

"L'Adultera," 2. Aufl.

"Unwiederbringlich" appeared in the *Deutsche Rundschau*.

1892

Finishes "Die Poggenpuhls" (XI, 284).

Begins correction of "Effi Briest."

Decides to write "Kinderjahre" to 1832; works on autobiography for some weeks (XI, 295 ff.).

"Grafschaft Ruppin" (increased) 5. Aufl. (cf. XI, 125 and note, 284).

"Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg," Volksausgabe (Berlin), 4 vols.

"Cecile," Neue Ausgabe.

"Kriegsgefangen," 2. Aufl.; this appeared also in French translation (Paris).

"Frau Jenny Treibel" (Berlin, *first* two *editions*); appeared before in *Deutsche Rundschau*.

"Unwiederbringlich" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1893

Correction of "Effi Briest," written three years before.

"Frau Jenny Treibel," 3. Aufl.

Four short stories appear in *Deutsche Rundschau* (XI, 302 and note); these appear later under the title "Von, vor und nach der Reise."

"Meine Kinderjahre" (Berlin, *first edition*).

1894

Correction of "Die Poggenpuhls."

"Unwiederbringlich" appeared in Danish translation (XI, 331).

"Effi Briest" appeared in *Deutsche Rundschau* from October on (XI, 340 and note).

"Meine Kinderjahre," 2.–3. Aufl.

"Von, vor und nach der Reise" (Berlin, *first* two *editions*).

"Schach von Wuthenow," 3. Aufl.

"Kriegsgefangen," 3. Aufl.

1895

Began "Der Stechlin."

Work during the winter is on a second volume of reminiscences, "Fortsetzung der Kinderjahre"; reference is to "Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig"; some chapters appeared in *Pan* (XI, 336, note).

Seeks material for "Die Likedeeler" (XI, 343 f.; cf. above, p. 148; also, outline for 1887).

"Effi Briest" (Berlin, *first* three *editions*).

"Die Poggenpuhls" appeared in *Vom Fels zum Meer.*

1896

Some chapters of "Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig" appear in *Deutsche Rundschau* (XI, 381, note); finishes and corrects volume 2, "Erinnerungen."

Wrote "Der Stechlin" in the winter (XI, 388).

"Vor dem Sturm," Volksausgabe (Berlin).

"Grafschaft Ruppin," 6. Aufl.

"Frau Jenny Treibel," 4. Aufl.

"Effi Briest," 4.–5. Aufl.

"Die Poggenpuhls" (Berlin, *first* four *editions*).

1897

Prepares 5th edition of "Gedichte" with additions (XI, 424, 440).

"Effi Briest," 6. Aufl.

"Der Stechlin" appeared first in *Über Land und Meer* (XI, 433).

1898

"Effi Briest," 7. Aufl.

"Gedichte," 5. Aufl.

"Frau Jenny Treibel," 5. Aufl.

"Kriegsgefangen," 4. Aufl.

"L'Adultera," 3. Aufl.

"Unwiederbringlich," 2.–3. Aufl.

"Der Stechlin" (Berlin, *first* five *editions*).

"Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig" (Berlin, *first edition*).

Plan to work on "Das Ländchen Friesack und die Bredows" (XI, 472 f.).

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ERRATA

Page xxviii, line 28. For *Friedrichs dr'o* read *Friedrichs d'or.*

P. 9, note 1. For *aberes* read *aber es.*

P. 26, note 1. For *zurück;kehren* read *zurück-kehren.*

P. 37, note 3. For *n. 1* read *n. 2.*

P. 64, notes. For [8]*V. Z.* read [7]*V. Z.*

For [3]*The only, etc.* read [8]*The only, etc.*

P. 84, l. 7. For *Indemselben* read *In demselben.*

P. 93, l. 4. For *Mann muss* read *Man muss.*

l. 20. For *avoids affectation, the falseness* read *avoids the affectation and falseness.*

l. 22. The quotation beginning "Herr Forster hat . . ." is misplaced. It should follow colon at foot of page to complete note 1.

P. 153, note 1. Insert close of parenthesis after *p. 22* at end of note.

P. 157, l. 18. For *Ahnlichen* read *Ähnlichen.*

P. 163, l. 3. Insert comma after *impulse.*

P. 182 (under *Bleibtreu*). For *Kampfum's* read *Kampf um's.*

P. 189. Insert bracket at beginning of introductory note.

P. 194 (under *Kette*). Omit comma in title *Carolina Brocchi.*

P. 197. For *Sittenfeld Conrad Alberti* read *Sittenfeld* (*Conrad Alberti*).